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Religion
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JOSEPH ERNEST McAFEE



Religion and the New American Democracy

JOSEPH ERNEST McAFEE

*Given by Harry Pratt
Johnson*

Discussing the forthcoming democratic
religious organization and touching
upon some fundamental concerns of re-
ligion as related to such organization

BV 625
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Introductory Note

DEMOCRACY must save, not merely be safe. Far more delicate, and scarcely less strenuous than hewing out a chance for democracy will be the task of shaping its institutions that they may be worthy of the chance. The complications of this task none can now define. The new democracy will make new demands upon American institutions. So much is clear. None can now say just how severe those demands will be. But the least thoughtful knows that radical measures will be necessary to reconstitute the American democracy after the redemption it is straining to vouchsafe to others.

The insufficiency of our religious system has long been the subject of pained comment. Its ineffectiveness relative to the responsibility imposed upon it was apparent before the war broke over us. The sense of this inadequacy must be greatly accentuated under the war strain and in the reconstruction period immediately to follow. No argument is required to demonstrate that the religious system needs rebuilding to fit into the new democracy. This pamphlet does not undertake such an argument. It assumes the fact and aims to point out some of the guiding principles and to indicate some of the probable directions of that reconstruction.

It is a mere sketch. Whole sections germane to the discussion are omitted. Other sections might be indefinitely elaborated with great profit, and will be elaborated later. There is more where this came

from, much more. The times are too tense to admit of exhaustive treatises on even the most vital subjects. The newspaper is the thoughtful man's Bible these days. But already the problems treated in this sketch are forced upon us.

The reader will find some emphatic statements. If he discovers any dogmatism the writer has dreadfully failed to make his meaning clear. This is certainly not a time to dogmatize. These are such times as upon their occurrence in the past have moved thoughtful men to pamphleteering and voluminous letter writing rather than attempts at finished treatises. This is a pamphlet. It attempts to break new ground here and there. Such plowing is heavy and the ground must be gone over again and again. That there is no finality in this work the writer is quite as conscious as any reader can be.

The writer is not less conscious of the definitive place these problems are to take in the pressing future. He hopes to contribute his share in the further discussion, utilizing protracted study of them under peculiarly illuminating conditions. If this pamphlet shall start correspondence with him or between readers it will be gratifying. Especially valuable will be criticisms and comments which may guide in treating with a fuller and truer emphasis any portion which may seem slighted or distorted.

The earnest layman whose moral and financial encouragement makes the issue of this pamphlet possible is one of those sincere spirits now happily multiplying who believe that the religious forces should dare to move out and on. Without committing himself to the positions taken in the pamphlet he wishes to encourage free and general discussion.

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Personal and Social Religion

A PERSONAL religious experience is worth anybody's while. A repetition of it is geometrical gain. Best of all is an unbroken succession which merges into an attitude of mind and will, a state of soul.

But such an experience is unique. It cannot be shared. It cannot be duplicated in another. It is personal. Last and least of all can it be institutionalized.

I

The attempt to institutionalize personal religious experience is one of the gravest of the several things the matter with the American church. The false psychology and the equally false mechanics of the proceeding have failed to impress even the thoughtful, largely because the church has slipped gradually into the delusion. But it has landed. It is there with both feet, head, such as it has retained, and heart, misguided howsoever. The dominant element in all of the vigorous denominations is committed to this attempt, and anathematizes, or laments lack of spirituality in, or forcibly banishes, according to temperament or official power, such elements as resist.

Historically there is little or no warrant for this attempt. None of the standard denominations was built originally for this purpose. The most numerous Protestant sect had its rise in a movement abroad in which the effort to institutionalize personal emotional states early developed, but in its transportation to

America and especially in its later development here, this one has had a history very similar to that of the other sects represented in America. Protestant churches grew out of theological controversies. They were builded to keep people thinking right. They were used to buttress creeds, and they are conceived by a considerable element as still designed for that purpose. The succession of heresy trials in the churches is a witness. These have fallen into disrepute and are approaching disuse. But that is by no will of this historical element still surviving in such numbers in some of the denominations as occasionally to precipitate new raids upon heresy.

The attempt to institutionalize creeds and pass doctrines down intact from one generation to another has proved discouraging to all except thorough-going doctrinaires. The psychological descendants of the Inquisitors and heretic-burners are as avidious as ever to persist in the attempt, though styles in inquisition and incineration have changed. But the controlling element in all the churches more and more insist upon a different emphasis. They are zealous for regularity, but the test of regularity they wish to be an emotional experience. They have so far been mostly occupied with resisting the cold-blooded creed-worshippers within the churches. Dominant now for the most part, they are seeking to reshape the churches about their conception. And this, as already remarked, is what in large part ails the American churches.

The futility of seeking to institutionalize personal experience will not be fully impressive until after further attempts at it among the churches. But the

next and a not very distant stage will certainly be a radical transformation of the American system—or the American chaos—of religious organization about a norm which is really capable of institutional expression. But, in the meantime, what of this present attempt to shape the policy of the churches? How is it going and where will it come out?

One danger is that the failure of the attempt to standardize personal religious experience will stigmatize any and all of it. It has done so already. Thousands of persons, moved profoundly by religious impulses but endowed with delicate sensibilities, decline to allow their experiences to go by that name. They cannot permit so precious and vital a possession to become identified with the wooden article which the churchly manufactories are turning out. But these persons are becoming now so numerous and their appreciations of spiritual values have become so clarified that they are forming a sort of fellowship of their own. Their numbers and the high quality of their spiritual natures prompt the remark now heard on every side, that there is more religion outside of the church than there is inside. This will prove true or not, now or in the future, according to one's definition of religion. But the increasingly common impression that it is true at least helps to reveal the break-down of the attempt to manufacture religious experience.

The futility of the attempt to convert the church into this kind of a machine is further emphasized by its needlessness. Such religious manifestations are not dependent upon an institution. They are hindered by any system with an autocratic taint. The institu-

tion, especially if it has not a thoroughly democratic base, is in the way at the start and after it has been appropriated to the purposes of the movement it forthwith stifles it by the very excess of its rigid and mechanical devotion. Personal experience cannot be manufactured, but it can be inspired. The spark passes from great personalities to other persons, but does not bring along its kit of tools to knock together another like itself in another personality, nor does it even plant a seed to reproduce its exact genus and variety. Great personalities flash inspirations. They do their work more effectually and preserve the true spiritual type of their transmissions with the least possible hampering of institutional forms. Great preachers of today, and great religious inspirers in every age, develop independently of a rigid religious organization. The "prophets" have almost invariably been at outs with the ecclesiastical machine. They must be independent of it, at least, if they would fulfill their mission. Prophets are like poets; they are born, not made in theological seminaries or in any other sort of manufactory. If any issue from the factories they are an accident or an incident, and not the product. The process of spiritual birth may have come with the natural birth in a temperament of peculiar magnetism, or it may have emerged from a later gestation, but birth there must be if it is genuine. However successful any may have been or may be in the future in contriving incubators for the culture of this life, the life itself must come independently of mechanical devices.

II

The great preachers of today, so far as there are any, are in no proper sense the product of the church. Billy Sunday is not. Whatever may be the judgment of the quality of his inspirations, he is certainly a great popular inspirer of religious experiences. The church did not make him; the church cannot use him; the church cannot build itself about his methods.

The church certainly did not make him. He knows far more about a base-ball diamond than he does about a theological seminary. He has been admitted to the church's official ministry. Yet his examination in theology at the time of his ordination is still the jest of those who admitted him. The theology he preaches, though very much in evidence, is the least vital and genuine feature of his ministry. He has appropriated numerous formulas, some of them medieval in their significance, and these he exploits with great vehemence, but they either hinder his real effectiveness or serve only to give him standing with certain elements who expect to hear the changes rung upon well-worn dogmas. He was not trained in any of the church's schools. His early efforts were more or less repudiated by the church. It is only with his popular success that the church has "adopted" him.

The church as now constituted cannot use him, though it grows enthusiastic in the belief that it can. The fundamental reason is that the genuine in Billy Sunday, or any of his near or remote type, cannot be institutionalized. The lament is often heard that the churches do not properly "followup" the Sunday campaigns. It is no wonder that they fail. The thing

is impossible. Churches are not built up by such methods as his and in the nature of the case cannot be. It is the common experience that members brought into churches through his campaigns do not stick, or prove a recalcitrant element, or after some other fashion weaken rather than strengthen the organization. It is commonly remarked that the pastors of churches in the cities he visits would well begin at once to seek other fields; the campaigns unsettle them in their charges. It is only in a sort of desperation that the churches can afford to "adopt" such a force and method as Billy Sunday represents. Numbers of ministers are drawn into support of the campaigns against their own judgment and will. Agents of the movement labor by every device of persuasion to bring into line the one or the few ministers or church boards in the community who stand out against the campaign. This insistence upon conformity is becoming a serious menace to the whole movement. It is a forcing of standardization against which the very genius of the personal religious experience sought by the campaign must itself inevitably rebel.

Nor, therefore, can the church contrive to build an institution about the methods this movement represents. It will fall in collapse. The results already mentioned as deplored by those who support the campaigns, the comparatively meager strengthening of the organized churches, the reactionary effect upon the churches after the enthusiasm of the campaign has passed, the recalcitrant or unassimilable elements which are often swept into the churches by the campaigns,—all this is not incidental or adventitious.

sprung from the poor frailties of human nature to be exorcized by fasting and prayer. They are natural and inevitable results, a demonstration that the human nature involved runs true to type. An individual church supplied with the sort of preaching this movement provides speedily disintegrates. Under purely "evangelistic" preaching churches all over the country are doing it. Pastorates whose whole substance is that sort of preaching are of short duration. The infusion of that method goes far to explain the increasing changeableness of pastorates and the insecurity of ministers in their charges.

III

Preaching whose sum and substance is personal religion necessarily draws largely upon the experience of the preacher himself. This is limited even in the greatest personality. No boredom is worse than listening to the story of the conversion of the deacon who repeats it at every testimony meeting of his church. Once familiar even with so thrilling an event as the conversion of the Apostle Paul on the road to Damascus, one knows it and gains no particular spiritual benefit from the repetition of the story. If the Apostle Paul had had nothing more to contribute to the religious program of his own and succeeding ages than the tale of that adventure, he would not have been the Apostle Paul, but would have lived and died in the narrow obscurity to which so limited a range of experience and ideas must have confined him.

Or, though the "evangelistic" preacher shall draw to any extent upon funds which the personal experience of others shall supply him, even yet is his

material limited; he sooner or later exhausts his stock; his stories of death-bed conversions give out or grow stale from their sameness; his capacity to develop new scenes and play upon the gamut of personally observed or appropriated individual experiences is at least as limited as is that of the greatest novelists. No one can confine his reading for long to one story-teller, however avidous his appetite for fiction and extreme his adulation of his favorite author. Perhaps preaching is henceforth to be defined by these terms. Probably the preaching demanded by the future is to be precisely this welling forth of personal experience, and the interpretation for moral and inspirational ends of the experiences of the preacher himself and of other personal experiences he has been able to assimilate and run through the alembic of his own soul's appreciations. If so, the great preachers will certainly not be settled pastors and managers of community churches. They will be great spirits established in great centers where they can remain fixed and the procession can move past them, as the processions move through the theatres and as the great interpretative novels pass from hand to hand, or else they will be an itinerant order whose circuits, it may be hoped, will be more intelligently organized than the present flitting and fleeting pastoral charges.

It is suggestive that the American denomination which most nearly found its origin in this type of preaching and has sought most consistently to hold its churches true to its effects, the Methodist, has adopted and systematized the itineracy. And it is not less suggestive that in more recent years this same

denomination has been seeking to redeem its system from the natural effects of this method, has modified it to permit fixed and continuing pastorates in certain congregations. Parallel with this there has been a pronounced change in the character of Methodist preaching, some Methodist preaching, and an even more marked change in the conception of the church organization.

This denomination has furnished a laboratory in which, if the truth may not be apprehended *a priori*, it is demonstrated by experiment that social institutions cannot be permanently builded about a propaganda of individual religious experiences. The Methodist Church has been the most "evangelistic" of the denominations. It has "lost" more largely to other denominations. The ministry and the membership of some churches of other bodies in certain sections were in large proportion formerly Methodist. It is this persistent disintegration which has consciously or unconsciously forced the Methodist denomination to modify its "evangelistic" emphasis. In recent years when other denominations have more generally emphasized the "evangelistic note" this disintegrating process has spread to them. The gains of the "evangelistic" churches are large but their losses of "dismissed," or "placed on the reserve roll," or "residence unknown," or "fallen from grace," are also large, often nearly or quite equalling the gains.

IV

Reverting once more to the methods of the Billy Sunday campaigns, the efficiency of the business organization should be recognized. A minister, half

supporter and half critical of the movement, remarked the other day, "Anybody could succeed with such a business organization." He was more than half in error. The Billy Sunday business methods have properly been the admiration of all who admire that sort of thing. They have drawn into the support of the movement none can say how many forth-putting business men. The movement shows a capacity in a field where they know capacity when they see it. But the organization is effective to the end of its own movement. It would not and cannot be made effective to other and different ends. Devout souls deeply stirred by the campaign lament that the churches cannot permanently organize with the same efficiency. They cannot for the very reason that their institutions are permanent and they must embody permanent social aims to justify the continuing organization. The Billy Sunday campaigns are essentially and, if the Hibernianism may be permitted, fundamentally ephemeral. They could not establish themselves in a given city. The preacher's sermons give out, versatile as he is. The procession passes, and one evidence of the wisdom of the management is that the campaigns are closed before the procession is exhausted. The bigger the center of population to be reached the longer it is safe to continue the meetings. One of the commonest remarks to be heard even from those who faithfully support the movement is, "Yes, we had a Billy Sunday campaign, and it did our city a great deal of good, but we do not want another." There have been no "return dates." It could only be in the rarest cases, if there could be any, where a second campaign could

be "put across." As a church-builder, as furnishing the principle about which an institution might be constructed, such a method manifestly has little or nothing to offer. This is not necessarily a condemnation of the method for its own ends. The churches of the "evangelistic" type are attempting the impossible, and the sooner the fact is demonstrated to all the sooner will reconstruction of the American religious organization on stable and progressive lines be effected. These campaigns would seem to be a potent, though unintended, influence making toward that end.

V

Another very different, though not less illuminating illustration. Dr. John Henry Jowett is one of the rarest spirits of his age. He has put his impress upon two continents. He came to America a few years ago bearing the publicly expressed regret of the King of England, who spoke the sentiment of multitudes of his subjects, that Britain was losing so potent and inspiring a preacher. Dr. Jowett came to the pastorate of the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York, for two generations ranking as the "cathedral church" of its denomination. A preacher heralded as he had been upon his leaving England was the newspaper reporter's sensation. The preacher's first appearance he attended in numbers and with sharpened pencil. He came away sad, if not wise. He heard almost nothing to report which his managing editor would print. Dr. Jowett's sermons have never been extendedly reported in the American newspapers. Some may consider that to their credit. But the fact is worth noting in this connection. Dr.

Jowett has made no contribution to American religious organization, nor to any other distinctive phase of the American religious problem. More than one hearer has come away from his church service remarking, "That was a good sermon, but it might as well have been preached in the first or the sixteenth century as today." This will also be understood as a commendation rather than the contrary, in the estimate of some. Dr. Jowett has preached the universal elements in religion. No, not the universal in **religion**; he has spoken the common, international language of a distinct, and perhaps today the dominant type of pietistic souls in the Protestant churches. He has not interpreted religion in terms which the average newspaper reporter could understand or cared to understand. He has not preached to the "man on the street" in New York. And that, not because he has declined to resort to the lingo of the base-ball diamond or the patois of Bowery and Broadway restaurants. The verbiage is a minor consideration. He has not made religion seem real to those who are not informed and spiritually saturated with the imagery and conceptions of the Old and New Testaments. He is a Bible preacher, what is called in the theological seminaries an expository preacher. A large proportion of the people in New York and elsewhere in the United States know little and care less to know intimately the imagery and contents of religious literature from eighteen to thirty-five hundred years old. New York is an exceedingly modern city, and serenely accepts all the sneers and reproaches as well as the compliments which attach to that term. Dr. Jowett lives his highest life and thinks

his most inspiring thoughts in a very different world. His life is rich in personal religious experience. His preaching is vital with the flavor and insights of the most important single volume of religious literature produced by the human generations. But it has all the limitations of its confinement. If preaching must be narrowed to the range of one set of religious experiences his range is perhaps the most fruitful which could be selected. But into that range only a small proportion of the population among whom he lives has ever entered or ever will enter or can be induced to desire to enter. His preaching has proved, therefore, like himself, an alien in the city of his residence. No local event has ever stirred him to a great deliverance. No contemporaneous event of the present world moved him to a direct message until the war came on, and it was the British situation which then stirred him. He has remained a British subject and his religious consciousness has had a place for contemporaneous British life, though not even that has contributed the definitive and determinative character of his preaching. He has announced his intention to return to England to assist in the spiritual reconstruction which must follow the war. He is at home in England so far as he is at home anywhere in the modern world. He actually moves through the spiritual chambers constructed by many generations of Christian builders.

This extended analysis of one preacher is not critical nor intended as aught but an analysis. Some of the features brought out have a direct and others only an indirect bearing upon the matter in hand. Dr. Jowett is a rare example of the type of preacher

whose message grows out of the individual, personal religious consciousness. His insights are wonderful; his interpretations of his own religious experiences and of others into whose spiritual states his own religious consciousness permits him to enter, are most inspiring; his spirit is charming to all who can in any degree understand him; his store of religious plots and images and sketches and analyses are as nearly inexhaustible as a store drawn from such limited sources as his can well be. But he does not build a church nor can his method maintain a church,—unless a church is to be defined as a place where people assemble two or three times a week to hear sermons, some of whom have enjoyed the privilege of personal pastoral ministrations during the week. All the equipment which a preacher of this type needs is an auditorium, located in a center of population which includes enough persons not elsewhere religiously attached, and whose religious consciousness is molded and saturated with the spiritual substance of the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. With that the essential equipment is complete. That does not furnish basis for an institution such as the churches are even now understood to be in modern American society.

This “cathedral” church to which Dr. Jowett came from England was distinguished a generation ago for strong doctrinal preaching. There followed a period of transition to the more “evangelistic” type during which the church as an organization languished in a manner credible only to those informed of its inner history. Its condition was, indeed, quite incomprehensible to those accustomed to think of it as the

cathedral of its denomination when it became known that immediately before the coming of Dr. Jowett influential members were proposing its disorganization and the merging of the membership into other churches. It was Dr. Jowett's coming which saved the organization, and the organization, such as it is now, hangs upon his personality and his preaching, as is always more or less the case with preaching of this type. When he goes, it is safe to predict that the problems of the organization which emerged just before his coming will reappear in even more serious form, and all which can save the church will be a complete reconstruction about radically different ideals of church building or the securing of another personality for the pulpit strong enough to repeat Dr. Jowett's ministry of individualistic and personalized religious interpretation. In which latter case this "cathedral" church will be no more an institution than now, and must exhaust its functions in supplying an auditorium for the preacher and in collecting contributions for charitable purposes from the overflowing wealth of the congregation.

The most striking illustration of this type of ministry in the generation preceding this was Dr. T. DeWitt Talmage. He was the most brilliant preacher of his age, though not the most influential. He preached in what was properly styled a Tabernacle. He had three of them in Brooklyn, each, one after another, destroyed by fire. In the flames of the third, his church disappeared. The organization, such as it was, nucleated about his personality, and with his leaving Brooklyn the name disappeared from the records of his denomination.

The point of this discussion is not to cast slight upon this type of preachers and their preaching, and certainly not to disparage personal religious experiences. Though no personal experience can be universalized, nor, indeed, can any one person's be duplicated in another person, yet each person's experience of religion is for him, and for social purposes not less, invaluable. They deserve a distinct recognition in the social economy. But they do not need and they cannot thrive under a system which attempts to institutionalize or standardize them. They cannot be wholesomely cultivated through an organization such as the American church is now or is likely soon to be. What should be the aims and molding principle about which the American churches should be developed is another discussion, one of exceeding great importance; but one too far-reaching and intricate for this already extended article.

VI

The remainder of this space may properly be given to a more positive recognition of the social value of personal religion and to at least a rough definition of society's proper protection and encouragement of its inspirations.

The religious impulse in the individual cannot be suppressed. The long history of religious wars and massacres and inquisitions and diversions of civilization upon tangential courses of development is sufficient commentary upon the social miscalculation and iniquity of attempting suppression. The American system has been supposed to eradicate these tragic mistakes of earlier civilizations. In religion, as in

most other ranges of individual liberty, the fathers adopted and several succeeding generations have preserved the laissez-faire policy. To insure religious tolerance was thought to be all-sufficient. The present generation of Americans is getting out of conceit with the laissez-faire policy. It has been passed in review in the economic field, and, even though the war had not interposed to contribute its tremendous impulse, the social control of common economic interests was coming on apace under the normal demands of our advancing civilization. A similar recognition of what the laissez-faire policy is doing for religion has not been gained. But it cannot now be long delayed. The supposedly all-sufficient device of religious tolerance has proved capable of supplying groups and combinations of religious manipulators an arbitrary power which suppresses religious freedom, just as the so-called freedom of private initiative in the economic field has actually endowed combinations of capital with arbitrary control of common stores of material goods. The American churches are religious trusts under private control. Like all trusts some are more bad and some are less bad. In the absence of any other system some are rendering a public service better than no service at all. But for the worthy development of the religious life of the American people none of them is good enough. The system under which they operate cannot produce one church or many churches good enough.

In the religious field as in every other department of life, democracy must make provision for private initiative and for public order and efficiency. It has not been found easy to perfect the instruments for

that delicate achievement. They have not been perfected in the economic field. They are not more nearly perfect in the field of religion. But one inescapable evidence that the American religious consciousness is dissatisfied with the arbitrary control of our religious hierarchies is the widespread social service movement in the churches. This movement has not yet found itself. Its aims have so far been rather negative than positive. It springs of a conviction that something is wrong in religious organization and program. It is guided by no constructive policy by which a worthy program and organization are to be instituted. As a consequence American religious organization is apparently fast running into chaos. Dogma, doctrine, creed as a basis for religious organization has passed into disrepute. The new "evangelistic" movement is creating havoc rather than building a permanent structure, and the social service propaganda has so far little more than added to the confusion. As already intimated, the proposal of a program which shall meet the requirements of our new American democracy is a matter for another discussion. This view of the situation will permit intelligent comment upon the need and something of the nature of the proper social recognition of "private initiative" in religious experience.

I may seem to be wholly absorbed in the problems of the Protestant expression of religion. This is not true. The Protestant organizations are most typically American. They strikingly reveal the characteristic weaknesses of the American system of laissez-faire. In the end the Roman church and the Jewish congregations must face the problems here dis-

cussed. American society must make provision for the free expression of the religious consciousness of its people, any of its people, all of its people. And at the same time it must guarantee that orderly efficiency which can inhere only in an institutional coherence, not to say unity, without which efficiency is impossible and democracy fails. The Jew, the Romanist and even the neo-Pagan must be insured the right of "private initiative" in religion, no less than the Protestant. With that right not merely tolerated but positively encouraged under social guarantees, the present artificial religious distinctions and class barriers will disappear in new and more democratic alignments and classifications.

The fundamental evil of the program fostered by the "evangelistic trust" is the suppression of this private initiative. It has standardized a certain type of personal religious experience. It seizes the only recognized mechanism of social control in religion and uses it as an instrument to force this standard upon all. It openly declares through its practices and the pronouncements of many of its leaders that "evangelistic" preaching is the primary function of the church. It appropriates the historic machinery of religion for the inducement of the particular type of experience which it has standardized. It brings pressure to bear upon ministers and churches which is not less arbitrary and autocratic that it is employed in the "spiritual" realm. Within the evangelistic tabernacle itself methods of "spiritual" pressure must be judged upon their own merits. Any and all are legitimate which those who voluntarily assemble there shall accept as legitimate. But the taking over of the ma-

chinery of the churches to serve the ends of this movement either before or after the campaign is a usurpation of the institution which at present is the only bulwark of American religious liberties. Billy Sunday does no wiser thing than to insist that his meetings shall be conducted in tabernacles constructed for the purpose and to be hauled down once they have served their purpose. This is doubtless prompted by other motives than the service of religious liberty, but it is so far effective to that end. It is not only a violation of religious liberty arbitrarily to press the churches into the service of this movement, but the increasingly aggressive effort to do so must prove the undoing of the movement itself.

VII

In any thoroughly democratic scheme place must be made for religious evangelists. They belong to an important group serving the common good. Preacher, poet, prophet, promoter, propagandist,—that is not merely an alliteration; it is a classification. The liberties of this class should never be curtailed. The continuing health of a democratic society depends upon their free functioning. But when, under the guise and protection of such liberty, they assume arbitrarily to divert social institutions to their ends, the ends of human liberty suffer. Their duty is to persuade, not to rule. Their instruments are inspirations: the value of their service should be estimated solely by the quantity and quality of the inspirations they induce. When they turn to the forcible manufacture of inspirations their instruments have lost character and must be repudiated for any service in a democracy.

The American democracy suffers severely today from the lack of great preachers. They are now very few. The reason Billy Sunday has gained so wide a vogue is because the field he has entered is so little occupied. Mr. Bryan, our next most popular preacher, almost alone disputes the field with him. After them there is an enormous gap before the next class appear in sight. The rest are for the most part local or merely regional influences. It would not be so necessary that there should be a numerous company of national religious inspirers if local and regional evangelists eminently qualified for their part were more numerous.

Of the several reasons for the large number of wooden preachers in the pulpits the principal are, first, many have themselves never had a profound or communicable religious experience, and not a few are of temperaments incapable of such. They are capable of expressing religious ideas and emotions only in formulas and stereotyped phrases borrowed bodily from sources outside of themselves. Of course no vital preaching can issue from this process. Preachers must first be born and then they must be born again. Mere technical study will not produce them. And there is now no intelligent process of selection for the successful determination of who are qualified and who are not qualified. Probably the only finally successful process must be based upon natural selection: the proof of the preacher must be his preaching. And the basis of his success must first of all be his personal capacity and personal opportunity to experience religious realities. Given the capacity the mechanical application of the opportunity is feasible: training

will count. But nothing can supply the lack of capacity except the capacity itself, and that does not come by taking thought.

The present system of theological training does not furnish a successful or an intelligent method of selection. One feature of its misdirection is indicated by the very fact that it is called theological. As though theological instruction could prepare preachers! Another fact, disconcerting in advance, is that the seminaries pretty generally take what comes their way. There is some feeble effort to select from applicants. Every seminary maintains some entrance standards, but they are mainly scholastic, though even these are often low. One standard seminary a short time ago was reported to have not a single college graduate enrolled. The rule of some of the seminaries to admit only college or university graduates is honored often in the breach. But scholastic tests at the doors of theological seminaries will never produce effective preachers, especially when the two or three or four years following are devoted largely to the application of further scholastic tests to determine the worthiness of ministerial candidates. Scholastic attainments are doubtless of value, but they do not make preachers, as tragic experience in the American churches demonstrates.

A second reason for so much uninspiring ministration from the pulpits is the excessive load of managerial duties imposed upon the ministers by the recent effort of the churches to orient themselves in present day American society. Popular interest in doctrinal discussions or pleas for the acceptance of this or that set of religious dogmas has manifestly

disappeared. The churches have been compelled to change their emphasis from those considerations which originally established our continuing institutionalism. The object of this institutional zeal is not clearly defined, but that does not greatly detract from the zeal. The "successful" churches are usually highly organized, are operating numerous societies and clubs and guilds; they are demanding increasingly elaborate plants; they maintain offices with a clerical force and a more or less intricate system of "follow-up" in the various departments of finance, education, pastoral ministration, and such like. They employ not a single minister but a staff of ordained men, as well as a force of lay clerks, visitors and other assistants. And, the present point, they expect the man who occupies the pulpit and does the preaching to be the general manager of all this increasingly elaborate business system. Few other reasons for our wooden preaching are so definitive as this. I heard one minister explain with some pride that his staff consisted of 29 persons partially or wholly salaried. He was just leaving that pastorate to devote himself to "evangelistic" work, though he could not restrain some pride that he had been so successful by a popular test which had actually worked to his homiletical undoing. Another pastor of a church in a university town and with a congregation composed in considerable proportion of university people, confessed to a friend who chanced in upon the Sunday service that he had selected his text after he went into the pulpit. The burden of his job as a business manager is stifling even that scholastic skill in preaching which his theological training is supposed to have given him.

The majority of ministers have either too much or too little to do. In the meagerly organized and meagerly attended churches of the smaller centers where sectarian rivalries have riddled the community into cliques and small groups, the churches cannot keep an energetic man's time occupied. The young ministers are accustomed to say that such do not offer a "man's job." And in such a situation there can be no real inspiration to preaching. On the other hand, in the highly organized institutional churches, usually located in the larger centers of population, the minister is overloaded with managerial duties which not only occupy his time, but, more seriously still, cultivate a set of qualities and induce an attitude of mind which essentially disqualify him from effective preaching. No man can be a virtuoso on the flute and the clarinet in the same twenty-four hours, or in the same week. It is not alone that the hours in the day or the days in the week do not permit sufficient opportunity for practice, but the lip for excellent performance on one instrument disqualifies for excellent manipulation of the other. Only a Hopkinson Smith could build bridges and write novels at the same time. There are a few ministers who can keep office hours and manage the big business institution which the modern church has already become and still preach fairly satisfactory sermons, but American society may as well awaken to the fact that it is not going to get really great preaching from the corps of business managers who are now commissioned to run church plants.

A third reason for the prevailing uninspired preaching, the only other one here catalogued, grows out of

the other two. It is the bewilderment and generally insecure grip the minister has upon his task. He was trained for one vocation, he is expected to devote most of his time and effort to an essentially different vocation, and he is often vaguely conscious that neither of them is what American society needs from him for its religious development. The theological seminary training makes no clear recognition of the major work the minister will be expected to do, nor does it nor can it equip the individual for eminent success in preaching. The minister's first experience in his pastorate is often one of violent reaction against the system under which he has been trained, and the sense of futility haunts him perpetually as he presses bravely on in the attempt to learn by rough experience what his technical training did not supply. The feeling of having been misled or deceived, of being set at tasks he did not choose, of being pressed into service for which neither natural talents nor technical equipment qualify him,—such a feeling certainly does not eminently qualify a man for inspiring religious interpretations. The emotion is all the more disqualifying that the blame for the situation in which he finds himself cannot be accurately fixed. He may accuse himself for not being wiser to sense the situation in advance; he may cherish resentment against his theological preceptors and the system they serve; he may break out against the ecclesiastical system in which he is enmeshed. He likely can gain little satisfaction in any case. The feeling of futility persists and often only deepens as time passes. The hopelessness and the hopefulness of the situation is that nobody is to

blame, and that everybody is to blame. The whole system demands reordering.

VIII

Ministers are drifting. They drift from one charge to another, from one section of the country to another, from one denomination to another. The superintendent of missions in a middle western state had on his list not long ago the names of forty ministers of other denominations who had applied for pastorates in his denomination. Almost the entire membership of some district denominational groups of ministers has come out of other denominations. Unhappily this does not always make for a greater liberality nor a broader comity among the Christian sects. Those who thus pass from one sect to another do so for a reason. Attraction into the new sometimes appeals to other than the highest motives. Repulsion from the old leaves more or less bitter aversion. None other is so intolerant as a proselyte.

Rarely are the ministers of a given community natives. Natives or those of long residence are usually in control of the economic and social interests of the community, but almost never do the ministers of religion consist of native sons. Pastorates in most denominations are very brief, on the average. In a district organization embracing four populous counties of the Middle West a young minister less than four years on his field found himself the other day the senior member of his organization. In a community of three or four churches a young fellow actually not graduated from his theological course was jocularly boasting that he was the senior pastor of his "city."

This tendency where the "evangelistic" system is entrenched has been recognized by some denominations in a certain crude system. The "itinerancy" of ministers is a feature of their ecclesiastical order.

And indeed, it would seem clear that an itinerancy must become a definite feature of the developed religious organization. There must eventually be a clear recognition of the divergence between these two functions which the present order is forcing upon the same individuals. Instead of trying to combine in one man the preacher and the business manager, a large proportion of the ministers will be trained for business management, will reconcile themselves to that task as a joyous vocation, and will succeed in it. Others, and in the natural order a smaller proportion, will with equal joy and success devote themselves to preaching, the message of each, through an intelligently organized scheme of itinerancy, being given as wide a range of influence as the genuine inspirations of his preaching shall justify. In the perfected religious organization these itinerants will be of a different type, for the most part, and will claim and receive a dignity which is usually lacking in the case of the most of the evangelists now on the road. But in any case the demand for better preaching will compel specialization in this field. One of the open secrets of Billy Sunday's popular success is the limited range of his sermonizing and his consequent ability to put the full force of his particular art into each sermon. Long ago Benjamin Franklin sagely remarked of Whitefield, who was the Billy Sunday and more of his day, that he surpassed the regular ministry of the time in eloquence because he repeated his sermons

and developed new command of them and his audience with each repetition. Certainly, other circumstances being equal, a preacher who devotes a year's or a life-time's preparation to ten, rather than fifty-two or ten thousand sermons, will produce a better article in each.

Since the final quality which makes a sermon great is its interpretation of personal religious experience, the range of the preacher's maximum power must be limited, however robust and fertile the spiritual nature of the individual. Preachers of the highest capacity and power will be more and more in demand, and for a period of ministry limited to the exhaustion of their highest power. It follows not less conclusively that the number of such in demand will be limited. No popular remark is more common than that there are too many ministers. There are too many when all are expected to preach and each cherishes the opportunity as his highest prerogative. There will be better preaching and larger aggregate attendance upon preaching when the function has been centered in a smaller number of persons selected by the only finally conclusive test, the popular demand for their message. There will then be fewer protests such as that voiced the other day by a brusque but devoted layman, "We must get rid of a lot of this damn preaching." He expressed a sentiment shared by many others who do not have command of his vocabulary.

IX

What will then, also, tend powerfully to improve preaching will be the freedom to attend upon preaching for its own sake. A large proportion of those

who now attend upon the myriads of good, bad and indifferent sermons delivered from American pulpits are present from numerous other motives than that of listening to the sermon. The tendency to bring artificial pressure to bear upon people to "come out to the service" is one of the distinct weaknesses of the present religious order,—or disorder. Many ministers in their pleas for church attendance insist that people should not come to hear the preacher; they should be actuated by other motives which with more or less sincerity he denominates "higher," and after they have been inveigled into the sanctuary he proceeds to appropriate half of the period they are invited to be present for an exercise when the audience is compelled to hear him preach—or go to sleep. It will strengthen preaching and eventually enlarge the audiences when people are invited to hear the preacher's message, frankly invited for that purpose, and when the accompanying service is intelligently ordered to lead up to and bring to a climax that function.

In short, differentiation and specialization are essential to real progress here as in so many other fields. The American religious consciousness demands preaching, a great deal of it, but it will more and more demand and respond to high quality and its delivery undiluted and unhampered by the religious organization. No function in the religious field is so incapable of being cornered or monopolized. None must be left so free from the restrictions of the machine. When it is clearly perceived that churches are social institutions subject to social laws and at their best when serving social ends, and that preaching is

at its best when it furnishes inspirations to personal religious experience, unique, sole, and non-transferable in the case of each individual, churches will find a more worthy and efficient place in society and forty per cent. of our population will not be reputed to be devoid of religious experience because they do not yield themselves to the artificial demands of our present misguided religious institutions.

A definition of the social functions of the religious organization is, as already intimated, a matter for another discussion. Our newly quickened democracy is likely to take this matter in hand with vigor and with no great delay. The emancipation of the individual religious nature will be one of the most wholesome issues of this inevitable transformation of the religious order. The other outstanding result will be the intelligent devotion of religious institutions to social ends under democratic sanctions. Our institutions will far more efficiently serve the purposes of institutions when they no longer undertake to institutionalize the uninstitutionalizable.

Community Organization in Religion

I

THE new American democracy will inevitably overhaul the religious organization. The impulse to do so was growing in strength before the present world-shock was administered to quicken—or set back—impulses to progress. The question was put to a thoughtful farmer-mechanic the other day, "What is civilization?" and he replied in a flash, "What we are going to have when the war is over." A feature of this advanced social order "after the war is over" will certainly be a form of religious organization in the United States which will embody a nearer approach to those fundamentals of democracy which are to underlie all of the new social structure. They do not appear in the present organization. They are as conspicuously lacking here as anywhere in our social scheme.

We are so sure that the fathers spoke the final word when they declared the "separation of church and state" that to this day a laissez-faire policy is accepted as the full discharge of social responsibility in the matter of religion. Thomas Jefferson defined religion so purely in individual terms, and then so ceremoniously relieved the public conscience of concern for its institutions, that no succeeding generation has presumed to review the principles and formulas he and the age so largely under his influence promulgated.

But already there has begun in the local community, the point where most thorough-going reforms start, a shaking up of the old order,—or the complacently accepted confusion,—which Jefferson's school of laissez faire has given us. Nowhere has "the state" taken hold definitively, but certain local communities have. Our cardinal American doctrine of "a free church in a free state" has committed governmental agencies to a complete hands off, the farthest expression of control appearing in the government's patient tabulation each decade of the confusing statistics from the hundred and fifty-seven old religious sects and its crowding into the lists of the new brood which the completed decade has brought into being. Religious sects do not die, but our American laissez-faire policy brings new ones into being with a fecundity to threaten society with the despair of the old woman who lived in the shoe or of the gentleman who could never escape the dictum that "pigs is pigs." Even yet neither the federal government nor any "state" thinks seriously of interfering with this process, no matter what deluges flow in upon a long-suffering people. There is no reason why any and every community, big and little, may not have imposed upon it an organization of each and every one of these hundred and fifty or two hundred sects, except the sheer physical impossibility of bearing up under the weight. Under the load which some communities are compelled to bear they are now rebelling. That is the revealing sign of the times.

A wholesome inevitability in the movement for community churches is revealed in that nobody is "promoting" it. It is purely spontaneous and grows

out of the community's manifest need and desire. No "national agency" has conceived the idea and undertaken to control the project. This lack of direction is both a good and an evil. Eventually some method of communication must be established among these communities which have spontaneously responded to the pressure of necessity, else new generations will be consumed in wasteful experiments, and utter chaos will succeed the present organized and official confusion. But that is another story and calls for another treatment. To analyze the impulse giving rise to the community church, and to point out tendencies useful to the "new democracy," is the intention of this article.

II

The community church has a legacy of two bad examples. One is the so-called Union Church. It demonstrates the urgency and vitality of this more recent community movement that it should push on in the face of the manifest breakdown of the earlier effort to organize union churches. That type has failed, has for the most part simply "petered out." But the union church and the community church are two radically different things. It is important that all interested in questions of religious organization should realize this, and that those who undertake the development of the community church should know and avoid the mistakes now so clear in the earlier movement.

The union church was the conception of a day when creeds were universally made the basis of religious organization. The divisive sectarian system was seen to be ineffective and wrong. Each sect

preached and exacted a narrow or elaborate creed. Eradicate the evils they breed by building a new organization about a simple and broad creed. Frame one which will exclude fewer and so liberal that more can accept it. That was the reasoning. But the fallacy was fundamental. As a matter of fact the union church entered the lists as a new sect, a youngling and a constitutional weakling among robust and thoroughly seasoned competitors who have done just what the strong have always done and always will do to the weak in a general scramble for survival. Here and there a union church still remains, but none has showed a capacity to win out in the sectarian rough-and-tumble free-for-all. The union churches have surrendered and joined one of the established sects, or they have languished and died, or they linger on through an uneventful existence in secluded spots where nobody cares much for religion anyway and where that kind would as well be tolerated as another.

The fundamental fallacy was the creedal basis. Creeds are made to exclude, not to include. A religious creed cannot be constructed so liberal that all of any considerable community will subscribe to it. And the further it is emasculated and diluted the less enthusiasm will those discover who do subscribe. Churches founded upon liberal creeds are inherently weak, and in the free competition of the American system they have languished in the contest with the robust sects, whose stiff, devotion-compelling articles of faith claim the ardent loyalty of those who accept them. The attempt to gain unanimity by emphasizing the negations of intellectual doubt is a futility from which the Irish strain of humor in our Amer-

ican make-up should have saved us. Certainly after the history of the union church movement has been now so clearly written down the new community church program should not duplicate its fundamental mistakes.

The community church must let individuals believe what they will. It must keep hands off of creeds. It must rather encourage each individual to get the fullest satisfaction he may from any religious belief sincerely held, however diverse from the beliefs of others his may be. Community of faith will grow under democratic inspirations. Neighbors and fellow-workers for the common good will find even their conceptions of heaven and hell, or of no heaven and no hell, of God and immortality, or of no personal deity and no individual existence after this life,—will find that even in these remotest and farthest-reaching conceptions they will draw together and discover a true community and fellowship. But this deeper sympathy will spring out of liberty. Rigid creeds can never compel it. Heated argument and forensic oratory from sectarian pulpits can never generate it. These methods have already conspicuously failed.

III

The other bad example to be avoided is the Federated Church. A short time ago this was the final word in church building. But the democratic impulse has already revealed its inadequacies and carried aspiring communities beyond it. The federated church shows the virtue of taking the supreme emphasis off of a creed. It intimates that people may work together who do not hold the same intellectual

beliefs. This is great gain. But the federated church is timid. It can never be a vigorous force. It cannot project a strong program. It affects to surrender the sectarian system and yet holds to it with one hand, either out of a lingering fondness for the old order or from fear of its own insufficiency. In either case a robust church life is lacking.

This form of organization is systematically promoted under auspices which have at least the nominal approval of the sects. Few believe it ideal, but esteem it of value where the better, out-and-out-denominational church cannot be maintained. Official promoters are ardent for it, but the seasoned denominational field superintendent is rarely an enthusiastic supporter. It does not succeed in any of the terms by which he defines success. It certainly does not gather in staunch supporters of the sects it federates. And a little tinkering by the denominational agent from beyond the bounds of the community will usually induce it to fall apart. By its very constitution the denominational seams are left open,—for what reason but that they may be ripped out on a favorable occasion? A recalcitrant element in the organization itself or a denominational agent outside is usually not long in finding the occasion.

If a community is really serious in its desire to express the religious fellowship of its members it will be braver than to rest satisfied with a federated church. It will aspire to a more vigorous program than such an organization can embody. It will trust its democracy to the extent of effecting a genuine unity of purpose for the common good.

IV

What neither the union church nor the federated church has done the community organization in religion must do: it must include the entire community. Any kind of a church, so far as now generally conceived, is a selective group, a close corporation, organized to exclude more than to include, applying tests which draw lines of cleavage through the social fabric. Democracy cannot permanently tolerate this sort of an institution in handling interests of universal significance. Thousands of preachers have proclaimed the universal religious quality and impulse in men, have insisted that neglect of religion is a sin against essential humanity, have given currency to the philosopher's discovery that man is a religious animal. And democracy has been converted. It believes the philosopher and begins to recognize the inconsistency of the preacher when he proclaims the universality of the religious nature and then devises a system for its expression designed to exclude some from its benefits. Because man is essentially religious democracy must defend his religious liberties, and see that its institutions guarantee facilities for the free expression of this ineradicable element of his nature.

But churches of the present type make it impossible for democracy to function through them. Many of them proclaim a doctrine which the very genius of their organization belies. They tell men that they must be religious and then insist that they shall be religious after a fashion which they arbitrarily prescribe. Democracy must build its own religious institutions. Isolated groups of more or less interested promoters cannot do that work for it. For a demo-

cratic society to turn over this function to a hierarchy self-appointed, or, what amounts to the same thing, gaining its sanction from an assumed divine commission, is for it to demit its office and demonstrate itself to be no full and true democracy. If that is what the American doctrine of the "separation of church and state" amounts to, then it is no sound doctrine, and it is time American society redeemed its blunders and, in guarantee of the religious liberty it was founded to preserve, placed the religious interests of the people out of the reach of privately directed religious trusts.

Something of this task, it must be believed, the community church is soon to recognize as its commission. When the popular mind is clarified at this point and the possibilities of democracy in the religious field are appreciated, it is reasonable to expect such a "revival of religion" in America as few even of the devoutest saints have prayed for. Perhaps none have prayed for this kind. The most have besought the Lord to send their particular kind. Since their kinds stood in mutual antagonism, it should not be surprising that their prayers have neutralized one another in the ears of the God of democracy. At any rate, the "revival" has not assumed satisfactory proportions or substance. Good democrats will be satisfied with the "revival" to be effected when American communities generally take over the control of their religious organization. The very mistakes of the developing process will contribute to that satisfaction, if so be that they express the freedom of the community to order its own life unafraid and unhampered by influences beyond its control.

V

It should be worth while to pass in review some of the problems which this democratic impulse will encounter in effecting its organization. They fall into three groups. The first arise out of the prevalence of the sectarian order, time-honored in American history, and, with all of its present disrepute, strongly intrenched. The sectarian system, so far as it is self-conscious as a system, and the several denominations as self-conscious bodies, will resist as the genius of this assumption of democracy becomes clear. Without intending to state aught but the simple fact, it may be pointed out that each of the established sects is a machine whose existence is at stake in this move. Those who support the machine and those who constitute the machine cannot be clearly differentiated here any more than they can in the political field. But even after majorities have deserted a political machine it often asserts its continued existence and its assumed right to function. Every one of the one hundred and fifty-seven or more varieties within the present religious organization will assert this assumed right more or less vigorously, however clear may become the desertion of majorities in the support of the new democratic order.

This resistance will not spring wholly from self-interest. The temptation of those in office is strong and insidious to believe that their services are essential. Thus self-interest tends to creep in and color the clearest independent judgment. But even allowing for these more or less unworthy motives there is much sincere conviction back of the present sectarian

order. Many persons believe it their right not alone to think as they choose on religious subjects, which is conceded by everybody, but that they should be protected in their desire to foist their peculiar views upon society through legally sanctioned institutions. Few fail to see what a chaos such a demand is producing. Every like-minded group asserts the same right in its own behalf. But each believes it should have its right guaranteed nevertheless. Our church enjoys a divine sanction. We have the truth. Our revelation cannot be submitted to the final adjudication of the profane demos. Religious verities are not reached by popular vote, and we are unwilling to yield our irrefragable verities to that profanation. In varying degrees of sincerity and vigor this conviction prevails widely among denominational managers. While it is essentially divisive and has produced our present religious confusion, mutually antagonistic sects will find a strong bond of union in a common resistance to an attempt to organize religion on a democratic basis.

Many who recognize the inconceivable folly of permitting a political minority to set up in the community a civil organization of its own antagonistic to or parallel with the organization of the majority will still vehemently assert the right of a religious minority to do just that thing as over against the religious majority. In their view the comparison of a faction which calls itself a church with a political party is a sort of sacrilege. Certainly the parallel is scandalous enough when it is applied to the protestants' particular sect. A church, their particular church at least, is a holy thing; it exists by divine right; it gains its charter from no human government, nor does it exist

by the grace of any human social organization. Such special favors as it receives from carnal states, such as exemption from tax upon its property and protection by the officers of carnal laws, are rather graces which it bestows upon the community than the acknowledgment of an obligation to the community. The community's ownership of the churches within its bounds and its right to control its own is not conceded by denominational managers who maintain this conception of the divine origin and sanction of the church. The very ground on which the building stands is sacred, and the community's civil rights upon it are strictly limited not by expediency and the common social welfare but by sanctions which transcend the community's charter of existence and proceed from sources which human society may not call in question.

It does not feaze this reasoning to have it pointed out as above that there are in the United States somewhat more or less than one hundred and fifty separate and distinct organizations for which similar claims are sometimes made. It will be admitted by every particular group that some of these make false claims, and perhaps all but one do so, but many persist in the claim that their own particular hierarchy among the many hierarchies has the veritable divine sanction. The awakened democracy will be able to meet this objection to its control of its own institutions by the application of the panacea for so many of its ills, namely, publicity. Nothing could go farther to undermine this philosophy than the necessity to defend itself in public debate and in the columns of the popular press. There is quite sufficient of the mystical in

even American human nature to give its peculiar and valuable flavor to our religious life, but American common sense will deal with the divine-right doctrine as applied to a church much as democracy has dealt with the same doctrine when appropriated by civil rulers. When such "rights" conflict with the community's welfare, as they now often do, the choice is easy.

The sectarian establishment will force upon the community a very practical problem when property interests become involved. The local congregation has not complete title to its property in the usage of some denominations, and its very right of existence is vested outside of the community in the case of a large proportion of the sects. A denominational agent presides at the inception of the church, while its possible dissolution and each of its more important acts are subject to denominational control. Local boards and committees are at many points compelled to follow instructions from those "higher up." These systems are so numerous and their requirements so varied that community control would seem necessarily to demand superseding the authority of all of them. Communities have already become so restive under this kind of control that few denominations nowadays presume to exercise the full authority which their constitutions really vest in the central organization. Yet enough authority is exercised greatly to confuse and embarrass consistent community control. Central agencies sometimes step in and sell or appropriate property without the approval of recognized community agencies. The only permanent solution of such problems would seem to be the relinquishment on the part of the community and of all its

religious groups of allegiance to sectarian organizations.

This is a point which few agents of church federation or even of the most advanced school of "church union" are willing to concede. The inadequacy of the federated church to meet community needs has been recognized. Some leaders now advocate the definite union of all the church groups of a given community in one organization, but they insist that it shall bear the name of one of the recognized denominations, and *ipso facto* accept such sectarian obligations as are involved. These mergers are usually assuming the names of those sects which impose the least obligations from without upon the local congregation. This may relieve the embarrassment somewhat, but it does not, and, in the nature of the case, cannot solve the problem. Every general religious organization in the United States is a sect in the proper sense of the word. It is fundamentally inimical to the community idea in religion. Allegiance to it requires assuming the attitude of exclusiveness.

The argument for establishing denominational connections which is most strongly pressed upon the community church is that only thus can it maintain fellowships wider than its own group. Denominational agencies are conducting world-wide missionary work, and they are the only medium of fellowship with the religious world at large. A community centered in itself becomes "self-centered"; it loses much of the best benefits which religion is designed to bestow. No religious organization can thrive in the persistent disregard of the universal human fellowships.

In so far this point is well taken. Nothing could so

quickly and effectually blight the religious spirit in a community than the complete severing of its life from these broad human relations. But the maintenance of this fellowship on the sectarian basis is a delusion. What shall it profit a community to identify its benevolences, its spiritual aspirations and its hopes of human destiny with a sect running its thin lines of communication in a tenuous zig-zag 'round the world? No broad human fellowship is supplied by such a program. No religious conceptions are narrower and no programs are more dwarfing to the larger human soul than some which have projected missionary work to the ends of the earth. There is an essential breadth in the very idea of community religious organization which will speedily develop a fellowship incomparably more wholesome than any sectarian program can possibly embody.

VI

A second group of problems grow out of these just named and out-run them. Aside from the attitude of denominational managers, the community church must encounter prejudices and fixed conceptions among its own people which the sectarian system has bred through generations and which have been in-ground through a religious culture far antedating American institutions. The community idea in religion is revolutionary. It tends to set aside traditions which run back into the farthest civilizations from which our American system emanated. So revolutionary is it that it will not speedily be applied in full consistency. No process of reasoning will establish it. Communities will grow into it. Its philosophy

will be apprehended fully by none even of the leaders of the movement. They will move toward the certain goal largely by instinct. They will not know where they are going till they find themselves far on the way.

But such is the genius of democracy. Democracy is a great adventure. It spurns cut-and-dried certainties. It never works to architect's plans perfected in the last detail in advance of the beginning of operations. Its ideas and ideals expand and unfold with progress upon the structure it rears. Its securest advances are slow. Revolutions wrought by hurried violence must always be paid for during periods of reaction. The promising feature of the community church movement appears in its spontaneity. Nobody has forced it. Even sectarianism has suffered no injustice at its hands. Communities are nowhere hounding the sects out of their bounds. Many of the sects are preying upon their communities, getting much and giving little or nothing,—or even less than nothing in the spiritual blight they spread. But American communities have showed a marvelous patience and forbearance. Few or none of them are forcing the issue with sectarianism. They are patiently letting the sectarian organizations die a natural death before they take matters into their own hands. I have visited towns and villages by the score which have taken their educational system in hand and developed a unified and efficient program, of itself a demonstration of the new spiritual vigor in our social order. Yet these same communities patiently keep hands off while the two, three, five sects maintaining organizations in their bounds continue to muddle

along, sending in impossible preachers or allowing the organization to run for long periods with absolutely no pastoral care, patching up buildings out of date for creditable church work a generation ago and constituting an eye-sore as they stand immediately alongside of modern, spacious, highly equipped public school buildings. Yet the community indulges in no violent rebellion against such ineptitude. It occasionally makes tentative efforts to draw its religious forces together, but the outside agent of one of the sects claiming rights in the community interferes and away go all their plans and hopes for religious order and unified aggressiveness. With a sigh deepening under each new experience of that nature the community drags on hoping against hope for a day of regeneration in the liberty to control its own religious destiny. It certainly cannot be said that the old order has suffered violence at the hands of the new.

The sure sign that the revolution in the religious order will be permanent when it comes is this universal disinclination to violence in bringing it in. Again and again the proposal has been made by some over-wearied spirit waiting for the coming of the new commonwealth that all the progressives shall withdraw from the various sects, where they find much less fellowship than they would with each other, and that they form a new religious body to express a genuinely American and democratic impulse in religion. But the proposal has not met general favor, and will not so long as the democratic impulse is kept true. American religious life needs no more cliques and factions. To form another, no matter how imposing and numerous, would simply add one more

factor to the present intolerable confusion. It is notorious that sects never die once they are created. This experience has blighted the hope of "church union" under the sectarian system. No matter how evident is the demand of common sense and social propriety for the merging of two closely related bodies, at least a small recalcitrant element in one or both may be expected to decline to "merge," and the so-called merger either leaves the number of sects the same as before or adds one more to the present almost interminable list. It is manifest to every democratic soul that the new religious order must find a thoroughly democratic base and decline at whatever cost of delay to violate the democratic ideal in its creation or extension.

Communities must act as communities in establishing the new religious organization. Community churches belie the name when they enter the lists to compete with the sects. A community where a majority, or indeed any minority worthy of consideration, remains devoted to the sectarian order is not ready for a community church and should by no means attempt its organization. This movement will accordingly make its early advances only where the population is homogeneous to a large degree, racially, socially, and in religious tradition. Yet already there are demonstrations of the union of communities under the leadership of an existing organization where Protestants, Roman Catholics, those classified as neo-Pagans, if they will submit to any classification, and even Jews contribute to the support and participate personally in the distinct community fea-

tures of the church's program. Such churches are already "not far from the kingdom."

VII

The remaining space here may be properly devoted to an analysis of a few of the outstanding and more fundamental difficulties the community church will encounter within its own constituency in bringing in the new order. The first, already referred to specifically, lies in the foreground. In how many communities can the possibility of a "church" not founded upon a creed be practically conceived? To draw up a statement of "what we the people of Blankville believe" will occur to the average American as the first necessary step. And on that rock the already frail craft will split. A creed demands unanimous approval; it cannot be adopted by a majority vote. The population of any American community, however homogeneous, does not think unanimously upon any live doctrine. They do not politically; they do not socially; they do not educationally; and they certainly do not religiously. It has already been discovered that a unified political organization does not depend upon unanimity. In the typical American community a similar demonstration is complete in the educational field. In numerous towns private schools which once flourished have languished and disappeared in the advancing efficiency of and universal enthusiasm for the public school. The success of the community church depends upon ability to attain a similar achievement in religion.

In religion this movement must make against traditions and prejudices more deeply seated than in any

other department of life, doubtless. For which there are reasons. But the reasons must be set aside and traditions and prejudices put away if the new democracy shall justify itself. Division, faction, irreconcilable antagonisms in religion are now doing more to cloud the issue and frustrate the program of democracy in America than we realize. Their influence is occult and insidious, but all the more potent for being that. While no community can afford to commit violence upon the religious sensibilities of any of the people, yet the importance of persistent, aggressive, broad-minded, sympathetic effort to rid our society of its sectarian religious blight must not be relaxed by those who would advance the cause of democracy.

In the end it will be found that differing religious doctrines really less interfere with a common religious program than do differences in politics in a civil program. The socialist wishes to lay hands upon the civil organization right away and transform it radically, yet he has showed a capacity to live and work and help in advancing community interests along with his neighbors who are devoted to the present political order. Each political party exists to overhaul civil institutions here and now, and yet they have all somehow discovered a way of preserving social order and keeping their partisans in line to support the one civil program in every self-respecting American community. A large proportion of the traditional religious doctrines about which differences are most bitter concern an existence beyond and apart from the present order. In all except the extremely hierarchic churches the passage to heaven is a matter of individual arrangement already, and is assured or disal-

lowed independently of the institution which expresses the social purposes of religion in this world. An individualistic type of religious expression has of late been gaining rather than losing ground. This tendency will finally make for the advance of unified community organization. Individual experience requires little or no social machinery, and in the degree in which the purely individualistic features of religion are emphasized they are automatically removed from the field in which the community church is to function,—or from the field in which any church can function, for that matter. Thus the individualistic propagandists are serving the common cause without knowing or intending it. So far the most of them suppose themselves and their activities to be inimical to the new order. But their propaganda needs only to be pushed to its logical goal to make all religious organization impossible in so far as the area of their emphasis is involved. Individualism finally resolves humanity into a congeries of units, with either no need or no possibility of social relations. The sort of religion for which extreme individualism contends lies, therefore, beyond the province of churches or any other social institutions.

With those doctrines for which the more or less pronounced individualists contend removed from the field of controversy, the task will be so far simplified as to make a unified community program quite as feasible in religion as in any other department of life. Instead of attempting to stifle or discourage the propagation of the ideas of the religious individualists the community church may well encourage any who desire to exploit them. The chief reason they have

wrought such harm has been the lack of freedom, or the social embarrassments, under which they have been propagated. The truth ought to be given a free field, and democracy must see that it gains it. On the other hand, vagaries reveal their real character and cease to complicate the social situation soonest when they are allowed the same freedom.

In a real sense it will, therefore, appear that the community church must, so far from being creedless, embrace all creeds. It must avoid the doctrinal controversies which have so generally frustrated the best purposes of religion by so far transcending them as to include them all. Some community churches will need for the present and perhaps permanently to conduct an open forum where every phase and variety of religious belief entertained by individuals in the community shall have the right of the platform. No device will so speedily sift the good from the bad. Nothing will more promptly render the bad innocuous.

VIII

A second problem in this group will spring out of the inground tradition of an autocratic deity and an autocratic governance of the universe. Men made gods first of their fears of objects and forces in nature with which they had most intimately to deal. They then deified the potentates of the social order which they had themselves set up. As their conceptions and aspirations broadened and rose in the spiritual scale these deities became immensely powerful and more and more benevolent. Since the religious current runs the deepest of all in human nature it runs also slowest. Democracy is an innovation of relatively

recent date, and even in politics has not fully arrived. There, as in every department, autocracy reigned even among the most advanced human groups up to only the other day. The religious current, moving more slowly, has almost nowhere, even among the foremost democracies, advanced beyond the autocratic stage. An autocratic deity is still worshipped in practically all of our American churches. The official deity of every denomination, sect and religious group is an Autocrat, supremely benevolent but supremely arbitrary in his control. He rules according to principles of morality, but His moral system is not that of democracy. It is static, fixed for all ages past and for all to come. The moral principle of democracy is not of this nature. This irreconcilable antagonism between moral principles is the most serious problem the new religious order will have to face in the transformation from the old.

Happily the way has already been partially prepared. The official deity of our various religious sects and systems is not the God actually worshipped by the whole body even of their adherents. The common religious attitude toward outstanding natural events furnishes one line of evidence. The Lisbon earthquake and tidal wave in 1755 shook the religious systems of its day to their foundations, aroused almost endless debate, and drove numbers of persons into abject atheism. Preachers who undertook to interpret the San Francisco earthquake and fire of 1906 in the light of the official conceptions of deity got small and not deeply interested audiences. Most of the popular interest was expended in measures for the relief of the sufferers and in admiration for the

pluck of the Bay City people in rebuilding their shattered fortunes. The Galveston flood demonstrated that the sea, well known already to be exceedingly powerful, could be fended against by high enough and strong enough walls. When the Titanic went down and the first shock of horror was passed the whole thought of the two great democracies most affected was, "What human neglect or over-reaching or blundering is accountable, and how may such be avoided in the future?" The sinking of the Lusitania assumed no general religious significance except as the "honor" of having achieved it on the one hand, and, on the other, the reprobation of fiends who could have conceived it assumed a vivid moral quality. Even purely natural events like the Mont Pelie horror do not arouse the debates and attempts at the "justification of Providence" which followed every similar occurrence a few generations ago.

In their practical religious attitude there are many indications that the American people do not worship a deity wielding the absolute, arbitrary power which is ascribed to Him by their several creeds. The whole thought of the people is now in the way for a frank phrasing of fundamental doctrines which will put religion upon a democratic basis.

But the difficulties of the community church at this point are not to be minimized. Large numbers of the so-called religious-minded are apparently good democrats in politics but are thoroughly committed to an inexorable autocracy in religion. In certain pinches where vital community interests are involved their democracy fails them and their autocratic convictions come to the fore. In the minds of such there is noth-

ing essentially sacred about democracy. It is secular, inherently contaminated by its merely human origin, little more than a makeshift by which ingenious humans bridge over the imperfections of the present order into that perfect and serenely benevolent Autocracy when the divine will shall be supreme. Democracy may be the law of earth but autocracy is for them the blessed rule of heaven. For this type of religious mind the church exists in human society to perpetuate their conception. It should maintain a temporal loyalty to the present democratic civil scheme but its business of eternal significance is to cultivate hopes and yearnings for the coming autocratic order.

A community church cannot satisfy this type of mind and fulfill its religious aspirations. To do so would frustrate the very purpose of its existence. The only reassurance this situation offers is that this type of mind must pass, is passing. It goes to seed. It cannot permanently abide its own logical inconsistencies. It seizes upon such events as the present world-upheaval, or any conspicuous evidence of moral disorder, to revamp superstitions like the current premillenarianism. When the crisis has passed and the moral order reassumes its more even course another superstition is exploded and the popular religious sense is clarified anew.

The recrudescence of extreme millenarian views among large numbers in all of the Protestant American churches is just now very pronounced. It is throwing the religious system into a new confusion. It is rendering impossible any general mobilization of American religious forces in support of the larger

aspirations of humanity's present struggle. Superficially the multitudes of ministers who proclaim this doctrine from their pulpits and that proportion of their congregations who follow them may be loyal to the government and its program. Indeed some manifest an exuberant and noisy patriotism. But they can not be whole-heartedly loyal to the large purposes of the world program in which the American nation has assumed so definitive and responsible a place. For them Armageddon is on. At any instant that cataclysmic event may transpire which shall bring to an end the whole human order of which these strenuous military campaigns and tremendous social and economic upheavals are features, to usher in the personal and absolute reign of Christ here upon the earth. To achieve this end all moral agents and agencies not bowing to his will are to be swept to their doom. However others may anticipate a "peace without victory" the premillenarian looks for a victory unqualified and absolute. And it is a "peace" of which no statesman or military chieftain on either side of the trenches in Europe has the remotest expectation or conception.

The events of reconstruction after the war will automatically cause the collapse of this religious propaganda now pushed so zealously and with such apparent success. And its collapse will give an enormous new impulse to the democratization of religion. But autocratic elements will long linger in the religious fabric even of so thorough-going a democracy as it is hoped the American commonwealth will become. The conceptions have been inground through count-

less generations by precept and dogmatic interpretations of religious experience. The most strenuous exertions of the human mind have been devoted to building up philosophies and theologies into whose very fibre and fabric the deification of autocracy has been wrought. These philosophies and theologies remain with us. They run through the literature of every language and they irresistibly mold much of the thinking of every nation and race. To get away from them will involve the difficulties already experienced in ridding the popular mind of medical and meteorological superstitions, and a great many more besides.

It is no easy task democracy has before it. And the least easy in any department of life is in religion. Only the exceeding importance of the achievement can justify the attempt. The inground conceptions of ages will not be supplanted in a flash. There would be tremendous and irredeemable loss if they were. Multitudes of souls are sustained in their exertions even for that degree of democracy which they now help to achieve by these very hopes of a blessed security awaiting them as individuals in the life to come under a benign Autocracy. They would utterly despair without this comfort. Yet, while these earnest individuals must not be violently robbed of their soul's solace, the new religious order must advance with all reasonable speed to a democratic base if it would make secure the gains now being won through such carnage and blood as heretofore not even the utmost of human savagery has contrived.

IX

A third problem of this group grows out of the confusion in the popular mind and among religious leaders themselves as to what a church is for. Of the several objects advanced some churches emphasize two, three or more; others specialize upon one. Objects emphasized by one church or one denomination are accounted of little importance by another church or another whole denomination. Divergence of view here has been the cause of much controversy among church leaders, and certain denominations have come into existence as a result. Such find their meat and drink and the spring of their zeal in activities designed to magnify their divergence from the religious-minded of other groups.

Persons trained under these different and sometimes antagonistic traditions are found in every considerable American community. Here looms what seems a serious barrier. It will not be so readily disposed of as differences of doctrine. People can find ways of working together for common objects even though their theologies and philosophies may greatly differ. But if they cannot arrive at agreement as to the object for which they shall work their efforts are impotent.

There is much encouragement at the very outset in noting that these differences are largely the result of education and the enthusiasm of individual and specialized propagandists. The people themselves do not cherish such diverse views as to what the institutions of religion are for as the clamor of our religious sects would seem to indicate. The official attitude of the denominations is largely what the dominant

leaders make it. Propagandists are very easily ensnared in their own obsessions. One of the most conspicuous features of the present religious system is the ease with which a special-pleader can gain a following. All anyone needs to start a new church is a private obsession and a high degree of pertinacity in proclaiming it. With even moderate persuasive powers he can enlist enough weak or vagarious minds to constitute a following quite respectable in numbers, no matter how inconsequential his obsession may seem, if he shall comb with sufficient zeal our entire population of a hundred millions.

So far, therefore, from this situation's proving a permanent barrier to the progress of the community church idea, the attempt to unify religious institutions gains great popular acclaim. Religious license has run to such an extreme that few communities would not vote heartily for a thorough-going reconstruction if they were left free from official interference to express their will. This widespread and rising desire among the people themselves is what will eventually bring the community church to pass as the standard phase of American religious life. Once it is discovered that they can safely take these matters into their own hands and genuinely express the unity of purpose in religion which the people now often genuinely feel, most of the barriers between the various groups which now loom so large will crumble of their own weight.

Further reassurance appears in the genius of the community church as the expression of democracy. Democracy provides for diversity as well as unity. It institutionalizes common purposes and makes

room for individual and group activity within the scope of the larger purpose. Even purposes which are mutually antagonistic when pitted against one another in a narrower realm are harmonized in the comprehensive program of a thorough-going democracy. Democracy's program has use for contraries and even contradictories. An efficient community church will not give supreme emphasis to all the objects which the denominations now advocate, nor will some of them be tolerated in the normal community, since they are manifestly vagarious or prejudicial to the public good. But the very genius of democracy will guarantee that all which have a contribution to make to the public welfare shall have proper recognition and support. No purpose which fails to stand this test should desire to propagate itself, anyway. Just as in the matter of doctrine or religious belief the community organization will provide a forum which will offer advantages above that now enjoyed under the policy of laissez faire, so any one who feels impelled to advocate a particular program of religious activity will find his best opportunity under the auspices of a democratic order.

X

What the program of the fully developed community church will be is of course a question of final importance. Here lies the third group of problems. Happily no prophecy can detail the final program. There will be no rigid finality. Democracy has ways and a logic of its own. The tests of service cannot be cut-and-dried before the season. The event will determine the proper activities of a program. And

events, our neo-Pagans would remind us, lie in the lap of the gods. But certain of the outstanding demands upon that program may be readily defined by an analysis of the demands now made upon our religious agencies. The purposes embodied in our existing institutions are only partly the generation of obsessed propagandists. The more vigorous agencies are moving in the line of the popular demand, and it will be the business of the community church everywhere and always to respond to the clearly expressed popular will.

Objects of worship greatly vary among American worshippers, but worship is considered an essential feature of religion by multitudes. How can the community church provide adequately to meet this demand? All those individuals and groups who have active sense of the existence of a personal deity desire to express this sense in worship, and the same impulse, though differently expressed, appears in natures whose minds do not find a place in the universe for a personal deity. The ritualistic churches, largely supported in the United States as elsewhere, make their major appeal to this sense. These ritualistic churches differ among themselves. Not all those who wish to make much of worship desire to use the same symbols. An analysis of the demands which will be imposed upon the community church in this department is very important.

Certain of the denominations are "evangelical." They believe it to be the business of the church to convert people. This is indeed a dominant "note" in the official program of many of the sects. I have sought in an earlier discussion to analyze this situ-

ation and point out the limitations of a religious institution in handling an evangelistic propaganda. But the developed community organization must recognize this demand of the religious sense and provide for its expression.

Again, the business of the religious organization is by many conceived to be propaganda, extension into territory where the system does not prevail, both in this country and in foreign lands. One of the strongest emphases of numerous religious leaders is the missionary obligation. A church which is not missionary is anathema. How shall this demand be met by the program of the community church?

All these are questions of importance. Another paper takes them up for discussion. Many of what seem the most serious difficulties will disappear simply with their examination. A way around or over others will be found with search. Where demands are unreasonable or purely arbitrary their true character should be revealed on any and every account, and if the community church shall be the medium of the revelation it will in this alone render an invaluable service to American religious progress.

Community Church Program

IN an earlier paper of this series I sought to magnify the promise of the community church, the democratic organization of religion in American society. Democracy's church will be unlike any of the now prevailing types. Yet none can have better right to the name. The Greek equivalent *ἐκκλησία* was originally the Athenian demos gathered to take counsel upon measures of the common good. The term could have no more proper use than to describe the American democracy set about the conservation of its highest social values. That is the definition of religion in the phrasing of one of our ablest thinkers, "the consciousness of the higher social values."

The program which democracy will follow in discharging this responsibility only the event will determine. Nobody's fine-spun theory will control, certainly. To attempt to predict details would be foolish. Deferential counsel will be taken of the experience of the present order, which, while showing aberrations and misdirected tendencies, still embodies distinct demands of the popular religious consciousness. Arbitrary conceptions and private interests are dominant in the present sectarian organization, but where the popular response is sustained and intelligent a real and abiding demand is revealed. The people will require the satisfaction of these demands in a system which fully expresses their will.

I

What about worship? Is it properly central in religion, as churches and religious leaders often maintain? The present popular response furnishes some test. Worship is magnified in the ritualistic churches. These are on the whole the least popular in America. Their sanctuaries are crowded on festival occasions such as Easter and Christmas, but the steady week by week or day by day attendance is meager. Some of these churches proceed upon the principle that the efficacy of worship is not necessarily contingent upon the bodily presence of the people. The priests and other official agents of religion proceed with the same precision, however few or many worshippers may be present, or though none may appear at the appointed hour. From this extreme position theories of the place of worship in religion shade off into the practice of the freest of the so-called free churches which attract congregations almost entirely with educational influences and introduce features of worship as more or less incidental.

It is pertinent also to note the type of mind attracted by ritual, symbol, sacrament, the conventional instruments of worship. It can scarcely be said that the robust, democratic mind prevails among these. Though others also are found three sorts of persons prevail among the attendants at the services of the ritualistic churches. First, sincere mystics to whom symbols embody the deepest realities. There is a strain of the mystic in all of us, and a society which does not cultivate the mystical spirit in some measure loses a potent spiritual energy. But it is not customary to look to the mystic to develop and sustain the

strongest democratic institutions. Second, an idle class, persons who for various reasons do not feel the pressure of business, have no task binding them to sustained and strenuous effort. Women of wealth are disproportionately represented in the ritualistic churches. If our political literature of socialist tendency is consulted to determine the relative importance of this class in shaping the destinies of democracy certainly no exalted position will be assigned them. Few of any social faith can believe that this class express a normal demand in the religion of democracy. Third, minds which for one reason or another find it possible to keep their religion and motives for the other activities of their lives in mixture-proof compartments. Some like their religion to give their conscience no trouble in business. Some find that the dogmas of religion do not harmonize with the scientific principles with which in practical affairs they are called upon to deal, and they accordingly accept their religion on authority without attempts at revision to square it with science. Some find a response in their esthetic nature to religious forms which involves no parallel functioning of their intellectual and volitional faculties. Again, it would not occur to the devotee of democracy to seek his major support from these groups.

Some ritualistic churches have a disproportionate share of the ignorant in the community, but on the other hand some have a disproportion of the opulent class and of the culture which they affect. Ritualism is notoriously the buttress of autocracy, both in religion and in politics. This does not imply that form and ceremony, and in religion the worship which ex-

presses itself by these means, are essentially inconsistent with democracy. But plainness, directness, simplicity are more the historic marks of democracy than are pomp, parade, ritual.

Yet, however far it may be thought proper to press this demonstration of the alliance of ritual with the forces antagonistic to or neutral towards democracy, a democratic religious order will make place for worship. In its own cult it will certainly not acclaim the autocratic deity which all the established and especially ritualistic churches now recognize in their official creeds. Yet it will recognize by permission even such worship. It allows political anarchists to hire a hall, and grants them permits to harangue on the street corners. Any propaganda or cult which does not actually resort to violence in the overthrow of law and order democracy feels under obligation to itself and the human liberty it has achieved to suffer if not to encourage. The autocratic and aristocratic associations of ritualism must always compromise it in a democracy, and in religion it would seem plain that it will sink deeper and deeper into disfavor in American society. But it seems consistent with democracy at present to permit the lavishing of immense wealth by the exclusive classes upon clubs, private establishments and great semi-public institutions for the patronage of the indigent. When democracy prevails more intelligently in the industrial and economic realms these conditions will probably be altered. In similar fashion some of the strongest of the present supports of ritualism will be removed with the prevalence of democracy. Already the ritualistic churches are recognized more or less consistently as the depos-

itories of the opulent classes, their resources being used either for the maintenance of the expensive worship of the opulent themselves or for the patronage of the indigent either in worship or in charity. Extremes of the economic and social scale meet in the ritualistic churches as they do not in any other religious circles, but no one can believe that their association under such auspices makes for a thoroughgoing democracy.

II

It is not impossible to imagine something of the sort of ceremony by which a democratic religious order will cultivate reverence for "the higher social values." Adumbrations already appear in community pageants and historical dramas now growing so popular all over the country. These already display a distinct religious tendency. In many of the older countries of Europe the official religion has little or no spiritual significance for the people. It is a state function and is identified with the autocracy which still dominates civil traditions and organization even where parliaments have been established and other mechanisms of popular government have been introduced. The spiritual satisfactions of the people are rather gained from their folk lore and in their folk ceremonies. There is their real religion. Names do not create religious significance. The religious soul of the American people is already beginning to desert the shell it finds no longer habitable and is expressing itself in forms we are slow to recognize as of religious value. The "get together" movements, the summer Chautauquas, the Lyceum courses in all seasons, the

Old Home Weeks, the new patriotic functions no longer allowed to run to slam-bang and general riot, community pageants, community building programs, conversion of school and other public buildings into social centers, community theatres and town halls now used for other than official civil business, public recreation parks and gymnasiums, "commercial" clubs whose salaried agents devote themselves to the promotion of almost every conceivable form of community welfare, county and regional historical societies preserving local traditions and the fame of worthies who have built themselves into the social fabric, the popular canonizing of national heroes, the singling out of these heroes to embody distinct doctrines of national faith and social aspiration,—all this often escapes religious observation or becomes an unorganized spiritual revel. Few yet appreciate the real significance of these tendencies and how far they have already gone in supplanting our traditional forms and institutions of religion. It sometimes appears that in the community where the churches are most deserted and have gone farthest to seed these forms of spiritual expression are most vital. They are the inevitable compensation the community has itself gained for the failure of churches to furnish real religious leadership.

One of the striking phenomena of the present world war is the slight effect the great ethnic and so-called world religions have had in determining alignments. No war in history has been so charged with spiritual significance. In none other have ideals independent of lust of conquest and selfish aggression so far dominated the popular devotion. Yet Christians, both Ro-

man and Protestant, fight on both sides. Greek Catholic Russia is in alliance with Protestant England, Roman Catholic Italy and France, and Shintoist-Buddhist Japan. Liberal Germany and ultra-conservative Austria-Hungary are in close alliance with Mohammedan Turkey. Jews fight in both lines of trenches on all battle fronts. Even Confucian China and Hindu India join alliances which submerge their old ethnic devotions and reveal the stirrings of a new spiritual vitality. This may turn out to be the greatest religious war of human history. It is manifestly generating new spiritual ideals. After the shock has passed old religious forms will be charged with new meaning or where they are not adaptable will be discarded.

This discussion must go no farther afield at this point. But enough has been said to justify the expectation that the new democracy in America will have abundant encouragement in transforming an outworn religious system. Controversies even so time-honored and fundamental as those between Christianity and Judaism, Protestantism and Catholicism, Paganism and Christianity, are likely to be set aside. Many of the forms these systems have preserved must now pass into history among its other relics.

III

Turning abruptly to the question of mechanism and equipment for the expression of religion, it is manifest that communities will demand a more economical and efficient system than they now have. And the estate of the churches in many communities is now so desperate that they will themselves wel-

come a greater centralization of equipment even though they may insist upon maintaining sectarian forms of worship. Catholic priests and ministers of all branches of the Protestant Church already use the same room in the great state institutions, such as reformatories, asylums and prisons. Cases are multiplying where the same building is employed by two or more denominations. In many a community the investment of fifty or one hundred thousand dollars in a central religious plant, with one main or two or more smaller chambers for assembly would be a great economy and would greatly improve the facilities of each of the religious groups. The arrangement should soon be welcomed even by congregations which insist upon maintaining their separate organizations but are now in financial despair trying to maintain their present meager physical equipment. Any community might profitably adopt such a plan simply from the desire to cultivate the community spirit. The majority would at once prefer the main assembly for religious service, especially if the management should intelligently secure the preaching and other features of worship which appealed to the general sentiment. Justice and more would be done those who would not join the main gathering in supplying them with accommodations, and many of these smaller congregations would gradually disintegrate and merge into the general assembly. But even if they did not there would be immense spiritual as well as economic gain in thus bringing the community together physically at a common center. A manager with a sense of the mission of such an institution might perform such a ministry

of spiritual regeneration as five sectarian preachers could not achieve.

On the other hand, I was not long ago in a community of 2,500, with a rural constituency of perhaps another thousand, where one of the five or six denominations represented had just dedicated a church plant costing eighty thousand dollars, in this going its rivals but one better. Already another denomination was stirring its members to outdo this aggressive neighbor. The community is of course proud of such adornments as these structures. But it is manifest that the need does not justify the expenditure, and no community can permanently carry the load imposed by these insatiable sectarian ambitions. The expense of all these needless plants is really carried by the whole community. It must sooner or later rebel. In the town referred to one or two citizens with whom I talked were already shaking their heads over the situation. Probably one-third of the investment of that community in churches would have supplied a religious center much more serviceable to all. It could readily be designed so as to do ample present justice to the sects and at the same time introduce influences tending to suppress the sectarian rivalries which even those active in pressing them acknowledge to be foolish.

IV

Analyze another feature of the community church's program. Many of the existing churches are evangelical. They believe it their business to evangelize. They believe that men and women should be converted. These groups have formed a national feder-

ation, The Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America. They include a membership of from seventeen to twenty-two millions, and are religiously and otherwise influential beyond their numbers. Will the community church born of the new democracy evangelize, shape its program to "convert" people? By all means, though it will not aspire to press a sectarian creed upon any,—manifestly not. In so far as these "evangelical" churches are now doing that they are making no worthy contribution to our religious life, and the sooner they are superseded the better it will be for the general spiritual health. A change of heart in the individual, the turning of his purposes away from selfish gratification to aspirations after the common good,—that is a process in which the community church must believe with all of its energies, and which it must strive to bring about by every worthy device. Precisely that is the aim of community religion, that and the organization of members of the community for concerted endeavor in the realization of these ideals. But the community church must judge of the accomplishment of this process in the individual solely by the amount and character of the social service actually accomplished by him. It can properly apply no arbitrary tests. It must assume that the individual is of this intention. It must take it for granted that each individual desires to be a "member"; it can accept his exclusion only after he has deliberately excluded himself. Membership in the religious organization must stand on the same footing as membership in the civil. Instead of assuming in advance that each individual is evilly disposed he must be given credit for a desire to advance the common

good, and the end of all education and of every religious inspiration should be to deepen that purpose and train his faculties for the task.

This must be recognized as the mark of radical difference between the new community church and the church of the present order. Not all of the sectarian creeds proclaim the doctrine of total human depravity and of the original and constitutional sinfulness of the human nature, but all of them act upon it more or less consistently. In the definition of their theology regeneration is an act, an immediate and single event, and one in some of them over which the individual has no control, not a process through which he grows into the higher life and its duties and appreciations. This act must have transpired before the individual is eligible for church membership. Conversion is an occult secret.

A scheme could scarcely be devised more effectually to cultivate hypocrisy. And this actual result of the program is deplored by many church leaders. It is clear that considerable numbers in nominal "good and regular standing" in their respective churches have for various unworthy reasons claimed "conversion" when the process or act has never taken place. They use church membership not to serve the common good but dishonestly to advance their private fortune and serve selfish interests. Similar results always develop from attempts to contrive arbitrary tests of moral realities. Character is not determined by subscription to a creed nor by "joining" an organization. So clear is this that the sectarian theology where logically elaborated declares that character is not the determining consideration. The "merely

moral" man, and the making of "mere morality" the test in religion, are severely censured.

The radical differences between the basis of membership in the sectarian churches and the community church must be apparent even to those not versed in current sectarian theology. I have in an earlier paper of this series discussed at length the value of personal religious experience, and the impossibility of its being arbitrarily standardized by any social institution. The only just or feasible basis of social judgment upon any individual is the fruits of his life, and the community church will certainly not be beguiled into applying any other. No one will be judged and condemned in advance, at any rate.

V

It is not necessary here to duplicate the discussion of the earlier paper. The community church will make provision for the bringing to bear of inspirations to purer and more devoted living. It will evangelize with appeals true to its own genius. It will encourage preaching, and that under a free and unfettered system which will overcome the arbitrary limitations now fixing the character of a large proportion of the special pleading from sectarian pulpits. Already an order of free and powerful inspirers is forming. Some of our best preachers are settled in no fixed "charges," but move about to churches and communities upon demand. Even under the present order their number is likely greatly to increase. Hugh Black is sponsored by an educational institution as a professor-preacher at large. Albert Parker Fitch is scarcely less in demand as a preacher, also connected

with an educational institution. Dr. Hillis and Dr. Cadman are, especially at certain seasons, more on the road than they are fixed in their official sectarian charges. When the smaller and more isolated communities find that they can claim the best preaching of the day even occasionally they will be prompt to arrange a system of itineration for our eminent preachers which will supply them with a really worthy "parish." The itinerant motion picture films are winning this larger "parish," and the Chautauquas and lyceums are carrying their varied inspirations to isolated communities. These communities cannot much longer be induced to accept the sectarian preaching which is on the whole so poor relatively to the popular capacity to appreciate preaching that skimp church audiences are inevitable.

Of course the wider constituency which preaching will be designed under this system to serve, and the broad community basis upon which the religious organization rests, will react upon the preaching and modify the character of most of it. The truly great inspirers will be glad of this release from a bondage now manifestly irksome. The preachers I have named are even now in no proper sense sectarian pleaders. Many of their hearers do not know to what denominations they belong. Christians frequently attend the meetings conducted by Rabbi Wise and give joyful assent to his most characteristic utterances. He and the Felix Adlers are not the type of preachers to be identified with a narrow cult. The whole democracy owes it to itself and they owe it to all their fellow-citizens to share their inspirations with all, irrespec-

tive of the religious traditions from which they have sprung.

VI

A large proportion of the churches of today are missionary. Millions of dollars are collected annually through their efforts for the conduct of a religious propaganda in every part of the world. Will the community church be missionary? Will it provide for the systematic and enthusiastic propagation of its ideals? Yes, undoubtedly yes! It will have a gospel, a "good news," and such always zealously seek to propagate themselves.

The rising community spirit already gives striking evidence of this zeal. It appears in the often crude but yet vital manifestations of the "booster club." Community enthusiasm already burns like a fire in the bones of multitudes. Blankville claims the allegiance of its saints as did Jerusalem of old. They, too, are disposed to pray that their tongue may cleave to the roof of their mouth if they prefer not their Jerusalem above their chief joy. They do not let their tongue cleave to the roof of their mouth, at any rate; they keep it going incessantly about the charms of their town. Loyalty to "our town" runs deeper than the cheap preferences of one location over another. Community spirit burns with a purer, intenser flame than the rivalry of one county seat against its neighbor of the adjoining county can kindle. It has already assumed a distinct religious significance in many parts of the country.

It is of the nature of fire to spread. Communities are not ordinarily jealous of the neighbors who appro-

priate their achievements. They are rather proud and happy to see their neighbors imitate them. They gladly put themselves to trouble and expense to send forth ambassadors on occasion to spread their "good news." Current humor charges some of them with making occasion. The story has gone the rounds how an enthusiastic citizen of Los Angeles one day chanced into a town where a funeral was in progress. Most of the inhabitants seemed disposed to attend. The stranger followed them. After the minister in charge had concluded his more or less complimentary remarks relative to the deceased he gave the opportunity, as is the custom in some places, for any present to add a further word of appreciation. The deceased was apparently not eminently distinguished for his public spirit, for no one volunteered further comment. The silence becoming painful to the visiting stranger, he arose to say that while he was unfortunately not a friend of the departed and had therefore no eulogy of him to offer he would like to take advantage of the opportunity to make a few remarks about his own town, and forthwith proceeded to boost Los Angeles. One of O. Henry's best stories gives an extravagant picture of how "little old New York" can grip the soul of a poor vagrant who drifts into her bounds. Those who know Los Angeles and New York through and through as they now are may have difficulty in identifying such loyalty with pure spiritual elevations, but this religious devotion is based upon faith, as is all religion. What we are and have does not ever furnish the substance of religious faith, but what we hope for. The man who remained cold to the preacher's appeals because he did not care to

go to heaven anyway,—Missouri was good enough for him,—may never have actually lived and spoken, yet the aspirations to make these earthly communities the expression of the kingdom of heaven on earth have already gone far to undermine the old theology which made earth a “vale of tears” to be exchanged at the earliest feasible moment for blisses of another state. What must permanently queer the current evangelism supported by the sectarian system is that it brings its congregations to their feet lustily singing, “I am a stranger here; my home is far away.” This is not even justified by the teachings of the scripture on which such evangelism is supposed to be founded.

VII

A religious propaganda instinct with the community spirit and ideals can alone properly represent the American commonwealth. Many of our sectarian missions in foreign lands now claim and use freely the name “American.” In strict propriety this cannot be justified no matter how elevating may be the propaganda they conduct. In the case of some of the sectarian effort the presumption is so flagrant as to justify the resentment of the whole American people. Sectarian controversies are sometimes carried on to the mission fields. Happily the larger and stronger denominations are seeking by allotments of territory and other harmonious working agreements to reduce or eliminate these so far as their immediate representatives are concerned. But at best such compacts are only “gentlemen’s agreements” to be disregarded when gentlemanliness fails and never to be observed

in the case of sects who are not original parties to them. A few of the narrower American sects seem to have gone abroad for the express purpose of making proselytes among those who have been once converted under the ministrations of the larger American denominations. This has attained the dimensions of a national scandal. One of the federated bodies of missionary agencies has been asked to make a formal protest against the program of one of these sects. That the scandal is not more grave than it is is no thanks to the system under which the missionary propaganda is conducted; it is solely to the credit of the high-minded individuals who represent the cause. The system is essentially irresponsible and its evils would have compelled its transformation ere this if our religious life had not been so absolutely committed to the blighting *laissez-faire* policy.

At its inception effort was made to save the American missionary propaganda from these natural fruits of our domestic system. The first incorporated agency was called The American Board, Commissioners for Foreign Missions, which is still operating under its original name and charter. But with the multiplication of sectarian foreign missionary agencies its program has either from choice or from necessity been changed. It was originally designed to represent American Christianity abroad, and not a single sect. But our domestic religious system has proved too much for this laudable effort to keep the foreign propaganda truly representative, at least of the prevailing religious faith of the American people. Almost as scandalous confusion prevails now in the conduct of American Christian missions abroad as

characterizes our domestic religious life. Nobody believes that this state of affairs should or can be permitted to continue. Missionary leaders representing the most enlightened denominations are active in seeking to correct its most flagrant evils. But even their best efforts must be futile or next to it until our own religious life is re-ordered so as to make its real representation abroad possible. If the crowning spiritual achievement of the American people is their democracy, their religious propaganda abroad must be replete with scandal until the democratic impulse and method are incorporated in their religious system.

A sectarian propaganda must open our whole national life to serious compromise. One of the most ardent advocates of the military preparedness of the United States whom I have encountered is an American missionary in Japan. He frankly stated that amid the growing animosities toward things American among the Japanese people an American army and navy were necessary to the proper protection of himself and his associates. The tragic inconsistency of setting out upon a mission to propagate the spirit and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth under the active or potential protection of guns and battleships need not occupy us in this discussion. But it is in point to observe that a private individual engaging in a privately conducted enterprise in a foreign land has no moral right to commit the American nation to a far-reaching national policy of this or any similar sort. He maintained that he and his associates had the same rights to the protection of their government as had American merchants. Which may be a point

well taken so far as the national government is concerned. But the observation just now made applies with equal force to either party, and the moral sense of our whole people is discovering a disposition to apply it with increasing strictness at least to the unofficial and far too irresponsible mercantile representatives. It is just to the host of self-sacrificing American missionaries abroad to say that the majority of them take no such attitude. They have gone on a mission for which they claim no protection of guns and swords, and they would gladly lay down their lives unrequited rather than have one misguided foreign zealot slain by American military establishments in retaliation for injury to their persons or property. The soil of foreign missionary lands is still too red with American martyr blood to admit of any other interpretation of the spirit and program of the great proportion of American Christian missionaries.

VIII

Many into whose natures the sectarian conception of religious truth and religious motive has been ground will find it impossible to understand how the community organization of religion can embody a real missionary enthusiasm. But others will understand and be thrilled by the prospect of what the American mission in the world may become when it is inspired by an ardently democratic and truly religious impulse. However sinister influences may play here and there upon the supreme national undertaking of the present moment, there can be no doubt that the motive of the American people as a whole is

to make the nation's participation in the world war count to any necessary limit of sacrifice of blood and treasure in an unselfish contribution of the boon of democracy to any and all of the peoples of the earth. The missionary spirit never before in human history found so magnificent an expression. And one of the outstanding tragedies of the event is the inconsequential place our religious system as such has in either the inception or the direction of this monumental transaction. Our sectarian order has so dulled our senses and blurred our spiritual perceptions that few of our people so much as think of the affair as having religious quality or involving religious values. Religion has been so far set apart and aside as unrelated to the more immediate and intense expressions of our natures that this most profoundly spiritual commitment of a people which history has ever known goes by other names and is assumed to spring from other motives.

Our program in the Philippines and in Porto Rico is some suggestion of what sort of a missionary propaganda community religion will inspire. There are embarrassments in these particular cases caused by no will of ours. But these very embarrassments offered a temptation to violate the missionary spirit and vitiate the national motives with aspirations to selfish conquest. The fact that these temptations have been so successfully resisted demonstrates the more clearly the fundamental missionary motive. Individuals and groups and private corporations have violated the general purpose and have sought to exploit these populations for selfish gain, but the whole American people have never wavered in upholding

the national purpose of unselfish service to humanity in our relations with the islands which the Spanish-American war unexpectedly made the national charge. The deep grounding of this purpose appears in the calm unanimity with which the people accepted the codicil to the Monroe Doctrine so tersely phrased by President Wilson when he declared during the Mexican imbroglio, "This nation will never seek another foot of territory by conquest." Though written only among the popular utterances of one of our chief executives that declaration is now as fundamental in our organic national system as the constitution itself.

The course of the United States in relations with Cuba is to this day an enigma to nations born and bred in the school of conquest. They still cannot understand how the great Republic could fail to utilize an opportunity bodily and finally to annex territory so rich in resource and so obviously favorable to exploitation. They continue to see bluff and duplicity in the resurrender of the island on two occasions to political autonomy after common humanity had compelled the United States at large pecuniary loss to pacify the turbulent groups in the population. They believe that occasion is still to be sought for the arbitrary political and economic appropriation of this rich and beautiful domain. Here, also, the national purpose has been violated by the greed of individuals and American corporations, and groups of the Cuban population continue restive under unwarranted foreign exploitation, but the American national purpose has not wavered, and the rebuke and punishment of exploiters, so far as the American people have the power to mete them out to the guilty, await only the

clear appreciation of the evils from which Cuba suffers.

If the attention had not been universally absorbed in the war few events could have aroused so generally the interest of all civilized nations as the act of the Congress which is still in session as this is written, whereby the million and a quarter of population in Porto Rico were brought into full citizenship in the greatest Republic in the world, people who less than two decades ago were the virtual vassals and slaves of a conscienceless, autocratic power of Europe. And the most gratifying feature of the transaction is that this population is ready for citizenship, capable of assuming and discharging the responsibilities of orderly government and social self-control which such citizenship demands. One evidence of the fact is that the first plebiscite after their entrance into citizenship voted the abolition of the socially debauching traffic in intoxicating liquors.

One of the heads of government in Cuba recently made a tour for the study of social institutions in foreign countries. He extended his journey over several months and visited many lands of our hemisphere. He returned to declare that the public school system of Porto Rico was the most impressive fact of his wide observation. He might well be thus impressed. These schools are one of the wonders of the modern world, and they are the creation and development of less than two decades of the American occupation of the Island. They, with other influences emanating from American sources, are developing an intelligent, resourceful and conscientious citizenship. The most enthusiastic popular demonstration which has oc-

curred among this people readily moved to concerted enthusiasm, was that which celebrated their entrance into full civil rights under the American constitution. Their loyalty and recognition of benefits gained by American services to the Island must have gone far to prepare the population of the immediately neighboring group of islands for the plebiscite by which they with an overwhelming majority approved their recent transfer of sovereignty from Denmark to the United States.

The discussion of our relations with other West Indian Islands and with the whole of Latin America is one of intense interest and should throw many lights upon the development of the national missionary propaganda. The national attitude and motive here is seen to be profoundly religious when fully analyzed. The program by which the national purpose is to be expressed can never be fulfilled under our sectarian religious auspices. Already the scandal of sectarian abuses has moved religious leaders to adopt vigorous measures of co-operation and unification. But the sectarian ideal is fundamentally erroneous. In religious activities not less than in the development of business relations the nation must act consistently and under thoroughly responsible auspices in dealing with the international problems of our hemisphere. Such a discussion should manifestly extend far beyond the scope of this paper.

Scarcely less striking is our missionary relation to China. The diplomacy of John Hay does not at any point fix him in a higher place in history as the open-door policy to which he committed the United States in affairs Chinese. The return of the indemnity ex-

acted by the concert of powers from China as a punishment for the excesses of the Boxer uprising was another evidence of the American spirit. The United States put back into China's treasury its share of the indemnity for her to use in educating her youth for high civil and social service. As a result no foreign nation occupies a comparable place in the esteem and confidence of the Chinese government and the Chinese people. Even the natural antipathies aroused by the unjust treatment of Chinese subjects by some communities on our own soil seems to have been largely overcome by this national policy.

IX

All this points the way to the expression of the missionary impulse under the auspices of a thoroughgoing democracy in a manner and to an effect incomparably more beneficent and resultful than the utmost zeal under sectarian religious auspices could ever accomplish. This process truly expresses the purpose of the American people, and arouses their highest enthusiasms, whereas sectarian missions can appeal only to sectarian constituencies. Where these sectarian missions now reach out into the broader field of social service and community regeneration they more or less definitely repudiate their origin, and appeal to constituencies which will more and more consciously insist upon the surrender of sectarian control. The foreign mission boards which are doing the widest and most intelligent social service in foreign lands have already passed in some degree from such control. An attempt at sectarian domination of their activities would either lead to rebellion or must revo-

lutionize the program under which they are rendering their most beneficent service.

It is not in the nature of democracy to practice patronage, to reach down to populations conceived to be of a lower order of humanity, or to dole out charities to the indigent. It approaches all from the level stand of the human brotherhood. It indulges neither the "Lady Bountiful" program of all give, nor the miserly selfishness of all take. Mutuality is essential in all its policies. While it understands that it is more blessed to give than to receive, it does not gratuitously insult its neighbors by taking the attitude that they have nothing to give in spiritual as well as material benefits for values bestowed upon them. The spirit of patronage which qualifies the value of much sectarian missionary activity, where it does not wholly blight the spiritual effect, will be eradicated when community religion infuses its genius. We shall appreciate the fact that we have something to learn from the so-called heathen peoples. We shall not be in the attitude of dispensing truth, settled, sealed, a finality, of which we have been exclusively honored with the custody. But we shall find ourselves so happy in the enjoyment of human benefits that every brotherly impulse forces us to share them with our brethren of all humanity, gaining for ourselves by the process the inevitable blessings of those who freely give. Instead of embarrassing or stifling missionary endeavor, therefore, community religion will but bring the true missionary spirit to its flower, and establish a missionary program which will dedicate the whole American people in joyous commitment to humanity's spiritual regeneration and elevation.

X

We have been drifting more certainly toward the true religious haven than the most have realized. Sec-tarianism has been dying a natural death and com-munity religion has been coming to the birth imper-ceptibly. Keep hands off, therefore, and let the pro-cess go forward without forcing or confusing the is-sue even by discussing the process. This may be the recommendation of some progressive spirits. It is al-ready apparent that true religion cannot be confined by the arbitrary hierarchies assuming officially to sponsor it. Let them please themselves with their high pretensions if they will. The American people grow more genuinely religious all the time in spite of these efforts to dwarf and confine their aspirations.

That might be sound reasoning if the facts were in accord, and if the pressure of the times did not show a new need of religious development in the American democracy. It is the common verdict that in every field of endeavor where community health and progress are at stake we have reached or are ap-proaching a stand-still for the lack of a sounder moral sense and more healthy moral energies. Men and wo-men of character are called for from every quarter in numbers that are not forthcoming. They do not ap-pear of the fibre nor in the proportions which the nor-mal development of our institutions and our material expansion have a right to demand. Our only organ-ized effort to cultivate character is the sectarian Sun-day-school. Let any one who is acquainted with its present program and efficiency reply, Is it equal to its task? The moral and spiritual training of the young is in the hands of poorly trained volunteers, for the

most part. The teaching is as a rule doctrinally impossible where it is not positively superstitious. It grips the young so slightly that the boys desert at the first opportunity to escape and the girls of spirit would like to follow them if they dared. Attempts to introduce moral and religious training into the public schools are generally frustrated by the wrangle of sectarian officialism. I visited recently a rural community which has but one church and has never had but one. It serves the whole population. It stands immediately alongside the public school plant, both the church and the school being a distinct credit to the enterprise and devotion of the community. The pastor of the church teaches required religious courses in the high school, and they are accepted by the children and their parents as a matter of course. The high school enrollment well nigh breaks all records in showing more boys than girls in attendance.

The national character is high. But it is not high enough. American moral stamina is not strong enough to meet the demands now being made upon it. Our system of religious training of the young and of the religious culture of adult life is ridiculous, or would be if it were not so tragically inept. A few years ago one of our greatest states was so reduced in its capacity to administer its own laws that in the event of a virulent outbreak of lawlessness in connection with a labor strike the state government actually vested its police authority in bands of armed guards employed by the corporations involved in the labor dispute. The scandal stirred the commonwealth to its center and forced even a venal legislature to rational action. The life of society depends upon its

capacity to administer its own laws under its own sanctions and under its own authority.

Does society depend less upon the moral and spiritual vitality of its components? Is a society safe, not to ask after its self-respect, which deliberately turns over to competing, wrangling, inefficient sectarian agencies its whole responsibility for spiritual culture?

With rare wisdom even for them the fathers of the Republic enjoined in the Federal Constitution that Congress should never attempt to "establish" a religion. One can scarcely imagine how a thorough-going democracy would go about establishing a religion. Religion when rightly conceived is a spirit, a generator of inspirations, a culture of motive. Its confinement in rigid and hardening cults is just the evil from which democracy suffers. The religion of democracy will be like the thing itself, a mobile, living, unfolding reality which so far from needing the support of rigid cults must spurn them as it values its life.

If the new democracy now germinating is to survive and work its work it must have the support of a citizenship purely inspired by the holiest motives of which the human soul is capable. All the energies of religion must be brought to bear directly upon the task. This is impossible under present conditions. The official sanctions of religion are in the control of organically incapable agencies. They need to be released, not that they may be confined under new and more rigid bonds, but that they may freely play upon the consciousness and in the whole life of all the people. The business of making and perfecting a democracy needs to be made a matter of religious obliga-

tion. What an enormous acquisition of power would be gained for the supreme task of the American people if the whole force of religion were centered upon our great social problems! Make a mental survey of any community with which you are acquainted and calculate the vital energies of the population which are absorbed in fostering religious agencies and exercises having no remotest connection with the real task of community building, except that by their aristocratic or autocratic spirit, or their dead weight of indifference, they so far increase the difficulties of the forces of righteousness actually at work that they make their failure or their seriously qualified success inevitable! Suppose intelligent, conscientious, unafraid citizenship were laid upon every adherent of religious agencies as his first and paramount obligation, how simple even with our present enlightenment would prove many problems which now seem impossible of solution!

It has become apparent that democracy cannot permanently carry a load of idlers and meet its economic obligations. A great non-productive class is a luxury scandalous enough in the easiest times of peace. It is itself the more virulent breeder of wars. And when war actually comes the first concern of enlightened democracy is to institute means by which this load can be rolled off.

Democracy cannot longer bear its load of spiritual idlers. It boots nothing that these are busy about spiritual inconsequentials. Many of them are exceedingly busy, just as the idlers in the economic field are often working their muscles and keeping material substance in action at a wearisomely lively rate. But the

menace of their "idleness" is rendered all the more serious by their misdirected activity. Spiritual misdirections of effort are a frightful menace which the new democracy must overcome. Until our religious system is thoroughly overhauled we have used up all the spiritual energies available for democracy. This is as far as we can get. Without a cleaner, more puissant conscience in citizenship no appreciably greater progress can be attained than we now have achieved. With the enormous unutilized religious energies of the people released for and intelligently directed upon the urgent tasks of citizenship, no prophet can set a limit upon the American democracy's attainments. The dreary inconsequentialities which now occupy the attention of the faithful who attend religious services, which fill days of discussion at regional and national gatherings of religious bodies, which hold to their grinding task multitudes of students who might be our most inspiring leaders of the next decade and the next and the next, which pall upon the young in the conventional Sunday-school, which keep a multitude of our best minds and finest spirits at producing homiletic emanations from a dead past under inspirations of dead men bound by deadening restrictions of lifeless rhetoric and oratory,—all this is a load far too great for the new American democracy to carry. The old democracy of the placid days before 1914 was almost broken under it. It will be not the least of the benisons of the new order that this will be swept away.

With the whole spiritual power of the American people harnessed to their supreme tasks of democracy no achievement of good for humanity is impos-

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of spiritual power will grow with its institutions which now totter from over-workings of self-interest will find on the conscience and the zeal for good of all the people. Oncoming generations cultured in a goodness which is good. The best brains and the most heroic new student generation will be guided to community service. When they come together to deliberate they will do the will of the Power which shapes the goals which have inspired the hopes of democracy in all the ages. We shall mean and mean what we know of the Kingdom of Human Brotherhood.

THE END.

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